

QUEEN HORTENSE
AND HER FRIENDS
Vol. II



From an engraving by N. Langier after the picture by Girodet

Allen 160.26

Queen Hortense.

QUEEN HORTENSE AND HER FRIENDS

1783—1837

By I. A. TAYLOR

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"Queen Henrietta Maria," etc., etc.

WITH TWENTY-FOUR FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS
AND TWO PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES

IN TWO VOLUMES

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CHAPTER XV

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THE conclusion of the saddest chapter of her mother's life must have brought relief to Hortense. She had no longer to stand by helplessly, watching the accomplishment of the sacrifice ; it was possible to escape from the gaze of those who rejoiced in Joséphine's fall, and to avoid all but friendly faces. Yet Malmaison, full of memories of what had perhaps been the happiest years of both mother and daughter, must have served to accentuate the sharpness of regret. The Empress, moreover, having made an effort to go through the last scenes at the Tuileries with dignity and self-restraint, had now given way to the full expression of her grief. The excitement of the crisis, the consciousness that the eyes of the world were upon her, had borne her up

until the need for self-control was at an end ; but a reaction had set in, and, in spite of all that could be done to soothe and cheer her, she was perpetually in tears. In the presence of her children she found her chief consolation, and the tie, always strong, was riveted by misfortune. Both Hortense and her brother had accompanied her to Malmaison, and were, as Madame de Rémusat reported to her husband, full of courage. "The Viceroy is gay," she added, "and does what he can to give her strength. They are a real help to her."¹

To Eugène the present condition of his mother appeared to contain advantages, and he indulged the belief, as he told his wife, that she would be more happy and tranquil than before. It is not impossible that he was right. It was long since Joséphine had been untortured by the dread of the future, and certainty, even of disaster, is less wearing than doubt. The worst had befallen ; there was no longer anything to fear.

Whether or not Hortense shared her brother's hopes, she was not blind to the difficulties attending her mother's position, and when Madame de Rémusat gave proof of her fidelity by electing to share the fortunes of her fallen mistress, the Queen placed the situation before her plainly. She wished, she told the *dame du palais*, that she should not arrive at a final determination without full consideration. M. de Rémusat held a post in the Emperor's household, and such being the case, would his wife's position not be a false or embarrassing

¹ *Lettres de Madame de Rémusat*, t. ii, p. 284.

one? Was it well that she should relinquish the advantages attached to the service of a new Empress? "Think it all over," concluded her mistress's daughter. "I give you the advice of a friend, and you should reflect upon it."

Madame de Rémusat thanked the Queen, adhering, however, to the resolution she had formed. The only danger she foresaw, she added, was that if gossip concerning the Empress and her household were to be repeated to the Emperor, it was possible that she might be suspected by Joséphine of being the channel of communication. Should this occur, she would be compelled to resign her post. Hortense responded by the expression of a hope that her mother would be prudent, kissed the lady-in-waiting, and, on behalf of the Empress, accepted the sacrifice implied by her decision.¹

For the present there was no fear that Joséphine would suffer from lack of attention. It was true that at first some persons had hesitated to pay their respects to her, lest sympathy displayed towards his repudiated wife should have compromised them in the eyes of the Emperor. But when it became known that attention shown to her would have the contrary effect, the road to Malmaison became thronged by crowds of visitors, who, undeterred by wind and rain, were eager to offer their homage—and possibly to satisfy their curiosity. All Paris had been touched by the account of the closing

¹ *Lettres de Madame de Rémusat*, t. ii. pp. 284-6.

scenes at the Tuileries, and especially by the fact that Napoleon had shed tears. "That pleases us women," observed Madame de Rémusat. "Men's tears, and above all those of kings, never fail in their effect."¹

It was, indeed, of a superfluity of sympathy rather than of its absence that those watching Joséphine with the anxious eyes of affection were inclined to complain. Her wound was too fresh not to be reopened by a touch, however well meant, and Napoleon's letters in particular had an effect upon her the reverse of soothing. Her lady-in-waiting was of opinion that he should be asked to moderate his expressions of grief, for when he displayed sadness the Empress—so much more worthy of compassion than he—fell into a condition of despair causing it almost to appear that her brain was affected. Madame de Rémusat was not a specially soft-hearted woman, nor was her affection for her mistress the blind adoration Joséphine had inspired in other members of the Imperial household²; nevertheless, it is evident that the tragedy of the situation had moved her strongly. "The Empress," she said, "was gentle, affectionate, all that was necessary to rend the heart. She uttered not a word too much, gave vent to no bitterness, but displayed the sweetness of an angel." At the same time she was in danger of falling into a condition of apathy from

¹ *Lettres de Madame de Rémusat*, t. ii, p. 283.

² "Ce fut un concert de lamentations à ne pouvoir exprimer, lorsque cette femme adorée traversa le court espace qui la séparait de sa voiture."—*Constant*, t. iv. 224.

which, in her attendant's opinion, measures should be taken to rouse her.

"It seems to me at times," she would say, "that I am dead, and there remains in me nothing but a vague power of feeling that I no longer exist."

It was a state of which the pathos must have been acutely felt by the daughter who loved her. Standing close at her side, no suffering inflicted upon Joséphine left her untouched; and, her mother's constant companion, she shared with her the sorrow of these first days of abandonment. With the Empress, too, Hortense was bidden by Napoleon to dine at Trianon, and saw her seated as an invited guest where she had presided as mistress. The position might have been expected to accentuate to an unbearable degree the change in her fortunes; but it was not Joséphine's habit to refuse compensations, and so full of gladness was she at the meeting that, according to a wondering looker-on, it might have been thought that no parting had taken place.¹

Meantime, Hortense had not been without more personal subjects of preoccupation than even those furnished by her mother's affairs. Her attitude towards her husband had been unusually conciliatory, since, in spite of the slight implied by Louis' avoidance of his own house, she had paid him a formal visit at that of his mother. With *Madame Mère* at hand to fan the flame of his antipathy, he was, however, not only in no mood to suspend hostilities, but lost no time

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle d'Avrillon*, t. ii. p. 160.

in taking steps to enable him to follow his brother's example. As early as December 17 he had addressed a formal petition to the Emperor in order to obtain the necessary permission, entreating that Napoleon would bestow his approval upon a separation, cause his elder son to be placed in his hands, the custody of the younger remaining with the Queen ; and finally requested that, in accordance with the statute dealing with the Imperial family, the prescribed family council should be called together, so that his wishes might be carried into effect.

It is noticeable that in this document no grievances were alleged, no motives for the line of conduct it indicated were supplied. The King desired a separation, and that was all. Hortense must have concurred in that desire ; but her counsellors at this time induced her to move warily, and she seems to have played a passive part, refraining from associating herself in her husband's demand for freedom. It is possible that in thus acting she was governed by a knowledge that any pressure to be brought upon the Emperor would be useless, and that opposition to his will would be merely to irritate him uselessly, and would bring her no nearer to the liberty she coveted.

The moment, as she was probably aware, was not one when Napoleon would be inclined to subordinate other and more important considerations to his brother's private gratification. It is unnecessary to enter into the political questions at issue between France and Holland during this winter and spring,

but it should be borne in mind that they had reached a point placing the brothers in an attitude of antagonism bordering upon open strife, Louis being not even permitted to return to the dominions he nominally ruled. Napoleon had formed the project of annexing Holland, and of rendering it a province of France, and under these circumstances the King's attempt to make his sovereignty independent was foredoomed to failure. The conqueror in so many fights was not likely to allow his younger brother to win the victory.

The question of Louis' divorce was quickly decided. The family council, when summoned, acted, as might have been anticipated, as the Emperor's mouthpiece. Its deliberations resulted in a declaration that it was impossible to pronounce upon a demand when no grounds for it had been set forth; that a formal deed of separation was inexpedient, and also superfluous, since it would bestow upon husband and wife no greater an amount of liberty than could be secured by other means. In any case causes for the King's request must be produced before any step could be taken in the matter.

So far there was a certain show of justice and of impartiality in the course pursued. But on the very same day that the family council met, Napoleon accorded Hortense permission to remain in Paris, retaining possession of Saint-Leu and the hôtel in the rue Cérutti; whilst a sufficient income was assured to her, and she was left the guardianship of both her

children. Notwithstanding the recent defeat suffered by the Beauharnais, or perhaps by reason of it, they were high in favour with the Emperor, and his step-daughter had, for the moment, won all along the line.

Meanwhile, negotiations were on foot for the Emperor's re-marriage, and Paris was in a state of expectation, with little attention to spare for subjects of less importance than the absorbing question of the hour. No time was to be lost ; and many were rejoicing that the preliminary step had at length been taken, and that hopes of a direct heir to the popular idol could be entertained. Others, however, remembered with regret Joséphine and her soft and winning ways. The army, in especial, remained faithful to her. There were veterans who could recall the early days of her marriage at the time that she had come to join Napoleon in Italy, and when disaster overtook him they shook their heads.

"He should not have left *la vieille*," they would say ; "she brought him, and also us, good luck."¹

Nevertheless, the question of the Emperor's fresh choice was the pressing one of the moment, and in its solution the Beauharnais strangely intermeddled. Writing to her husband on January 3, Madame de Metternich, wife of the Austrian Ambassador, gave a description of a singular visit she had paid to Malmaison.

¹ Parquin, *Souvenirs*.

“When I arrived,” she said, “only the Viceroy was in the salon, who is the best of human beings—he is the Queen of Holland as a man. He spoke much of you, and in the middle of our conversation the Queen came in, rejoicing that we had so soon renewed our acquaintance. Then, taking me apart, she said, ‘You know we are all Austrian at heart ; but you would never guess that my mother has had the courage to advise the Emperor to ask for your Archduchess.’ I had not recovered from my astonishment when the Empress entered, and after talking to me of all that has happened, and of all she had suffered, said to me, ‘I have a project that occupies me exclusively, and of which the success alone makes me hope that the sacrifice I have just made will not be entire loss. It is that the Emperor should marry your Archduchess. I spoke of it to him yesterday, and he said his choice is not yet made. But,’ she added, ‘I think, were he certain, of being accepted by you, it would be.’ . . . She said that the Emperor was to lunch with her to-day, and that she would then tell me something more positive.”¹

The picture of Joséphine finding consolation in the thought of a fresh marriage for the husband who had forsaken her is a strange one, but there is no reason to suspect her of any want of good faith. That Hortense should have consented to share in furthering her stepfather’s matrimonial projects is perhaps still more difficult to account for, and can only be explained

¹ *Mémoires de Metternich*, t. ii. pp. 314-5.

by the fact that in the eyes of those surrounding him he was the supreme controller of every law, whether human or divine.

In spite, however, of the Emperor's decree that the Carnival was to be a brilliant one, in spite of balls and *fêtes*, a shadow seemed to hang over the town. Caroline Murat, presiding at the Tuileries, was not liked, her manners comparing unfavourably with those, gracious and gentle, of the woman she replaced ; and though Hortense did her best to carry out the Emperor's wishes, she must have done so with a heavy heart. She will have commanded the sympathy of those around her, for she shared in her mother's popularity. "She was loved and loved truly," says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, writing of this period, when no interested motives would have been an incentive to a display of affection towards Joséphine's daughter ; "you saw it when people met at her house. They were at their ease there ; she made every one so. There was music, conversation, billiards, drawing—in short, one was amused, which was never the case at the house of the Queen of Naples, except on the days when she gave balls."¹

Attached to the household of *Madame Mère* the Duchess should be a witness unprejudiced in favour of her mistress's unloved daughter-in-law. Hortense possessed a rare and valuable gift—the "*génie de maîtresse de maison*."

¹ *Mémoires de la Duchesse d'Abrantès*, t. vii. p. 585,

The presence of her husband in Paris must have been a source of some disquiet to the Queen during this spring, more especially in relation to her children. The claim he had put forward to the custody of the elder boy had given an indication of possible trouble in the future, and he continued, in spite of his defeat, to vindicate his rights as a father. Prince Napoleon Louis was constantly taken to visit him, the King exerting himself to provide amusements for the child, and likewise taking thought for the more serious matter of his education. Though he had not yet completed his sixth year, he would in fifteen months reach the age when Princes of the Imperial family were consigned to the guardianship of the Emperor, and Louis was anxious to place him provisionally in hands he could trust. It was upon M. de Bonald, known to him by his writings, that the King's choice fell, in virtue of the theocratic principles there maintained. Bonald, however, wisely declined a difficult post, and the little Prince was left for the present in the charge of his *gouvernante*, Madame Boubers.

Meantime, Hortense was to be deprived of the comfort and support always derived from her brother's presence. Having done all that was possible to set his mother's future arrangements upon a satisfactory footing, Eugène was free to return to Italy until such time as his presence would be required, with that of his wife, to assist at the festivities in honour of the Emperor's approaching marriage.

To escape temporarily from Paris must have been a relief to the Viceroy; to find himself once more at home was a consolation for much. Every letter that had reached him from Milan had shown with what vehemence the Princesse Augusta's sympathies were engaged upon the side of her husband's family, and with how cheerful a courage she faced the results of the Beauharnais disaster. "Blotted out of the list of the great," she wrote on December 13, when the news was still fresh, "we shall be inscribed upon that of the happy. Is not that better?"¹ And again, when her husband's return was shortly expected, "I am young," she wrote, "but events have taught me to value greatness at its proper worth; so do not torment yourself on my account, and think only of the joy I am soon to feel in kissing you and in telling you by word of mouth that I love nothing in this world like my Eugène."²

In February the Viceroy was able to inform her that his mother had arrived at the Élysée; that the Emperor had visited her the same evening; that her business affairs were concluded, his own shortly to be so; and as, to judge by appearances, those of his sister would not be settled according to her wishes, there would be nothing to prevent his starting for Italy—"that is to say, doing what is most agreeable to my heart."³ On February 9, "in spite of the tears of my

¹ *Mémoires du Prince Eugène*, t. vi. p. 289.

² *Ibid.* t. vi. p. 315.

³ *Ibid.* t. vi. p. 314.

sister and the Empress," he was able to announce that he was to leave Paris in two days.

Of the wishes of Hortense, which, according to her brother, had so little chance of realisation, it is possible to do no more than to form a conjecture. Her future lay uncertain before her, whilst the disagreements between her husband and his brother were growing daily more threatening to Louis' position as King of Holland. It is said that when the Emperor had declared to the legislative body in December that changes would shortly be necessary in that kingdom, his stepdaughter demanded an explanation of language which appeared to contain a menace.

"*Ma foi*," the Emperor had answered, "understand it in a way to cause you alarm. Your husband is ungrateful. Holland should act with France. If he forces me to take extreme measures, I shall go so far as to have him declared incapable of managing his own affairs."

"It would be better to dethrone him," Hortense said, "than thus to degrade him."

"Very well, then let him submit to my will. Give him that advice," said Napoleon.

"He would not listen to me," she replied.

"So much the worse for you. It will be your fault. You would not have his love; he does not give you his trust. If you had wished it, your husband would have been your slave, and you would have guided him in your children's interest."¹

¹ *La Reine Hortense* (Turquan), p. 168.

Napoleon's counsels came too late. Louis was not disposed, at this stage, to accept advice from his wife ; and as the winter went by there were no signs of an amelioration of the relations between the brothers. With the pring the Emperor's intentions as to immediate action with regard to the subjects of disagreement underwent a certain change. Developments were taking place in the situation. The interest attending the divorce, with its emotions and regrets, was yielding to the more cheerful excitement due to the expected arrival of the new Empress. Napoleon's views concerning his future relations with Joséphine, formed when no compensation seemed too great for the sorrow he was causing her, were showing signs of modification ; and he was renouncing his first strange conception of an existence in which his former wife should continue to occupy a prominent place and intercourse with her should be frequent and close. Human nature is stronger than the most powerful of autocrats ; and the Emperor had begun to realise that her proximity might produce complications unfavourable to the success of his new domestic arrangements, and also that the constant presence of her daughter, in her character of Imperial Princess, at Court, might not be advisable. It may be that the fact that Eugène's wife had, on her arrival, preferred the hospitality of her mother-in-law's house at Malmaison¹ to a lodging at the Élysée, had served as an object-lesson on the possibility of rival and clashing claims ; and it has

¹ *Mémoires du Prince Eugène.*

been suggested that a desire to remove Hortense to a distance may have been one of the motives dictating the course he pursued with regard to Holland. Joséphine could be sent into honourable banishment in the duchy of Navarre, the gift of that property representing a mark of the Emperor's favour ; but were Louis to be deprived of his kingdom, it would have been a less easy matter to discover an excuse for his wife's exile from Paris. By yielding to his brother's instances, and refraining for the present from pursuing the policy of annexation, the Emperor would be provided with a pretext for insisting upon her return to a country of which she was Queen.¹ It is certain that the formal relinquishment of Napoleon's avowed intention of reducing Holland to the condition he had contemplated of a French province was coincident with a demand that Louis should consent once more to receive his wife under his roof. The King's assertion that such was Hortense's own desire, by reason of the false position she occupied in Paris, is uncorroborated by any proof, and all probability is against it.

At Compiègne the Queen learnt her fate. Thither husband and wife had accompanied the Court, to take their part in the great pageant of the Emperor's marriage. It was there that the meeting of Napoleon and his bride was to take place ; and there it was determined that Hortense should return to Holland, and resume her place in her husband's dominions. Whether

¹ *Napoléon et sa famille*, t. v. pp. 207, seq.

any apprehension of the Emperor's coming fiat had been entertained by her or not, the final decision appears to have found her unprepared. It is stated that on a certain night, after a conversation with his brother, Louis, at eleven o'clock, sent for his wife ; that, obeying the summons, she returned to her apartments an hour later in floods of tears, informing her attendants that no choice was to be given her, and that she was to be forced to leave Paris, and to follow her husband to Holland.

The blow in store for her daughter had been evidently totally unsuspected by Joséphine, and a letter she addressed to her after her arrival at Navarre indicates her ignorance that the step was so much as in contemplation. That Hortense, like herself, was to be sent into virtual banishment will have been no small addition to her causes of melancholy, already sufficient to weigh down spirits always easily depressed. Writing in a tone of subdued dejection of the warmth of the reception accorded her in her new home, she spoke of it as saddening—its very cordiality too like condolence. "They doubtless pitied me for being no longer anything. The Emperor is happy. He ought to be so more and more. This thought is a great comfort to me, and the only one that keeps up my courage. . . . The time seems a little long ; it will seem less so when you are here. I await you with impatience. I have had your lodging prepared. It is not a handsome one, you will be only camped there ; but you know with what tenderness you will be

received. If the Emperor asks you for news of me, tell him the truth—that my only occupation is to think of him.”¹

It would be difficult to conceive a picture more forlorn than that unconsciously sketched in Joséphine’s letter. About the fallen Empress there is something of the wistfulness of a forsaken child, looking mournfully on from a distance at joys it is forbidden to share. The lack of seriousness or backbone, the absence of dignity or reserve marking her character, only serve to enhance the pathos of the situation. No wonder that the time seemed “a little long” in the stillness of the country retreat, remote from that world and its pleasures Joséphine had loved so well. How should it have been otherwise? Yet from that Eden of earthly delight she was shut out for ever. It was a hard fate. When she wrote again she had learnt that the consolation of her daughter’s presence was to be denied her, and she was grieving for Hortense as well as for herself. She had hoped, she said, that a return to Holland was no longer thought of, and that Louis’ wife was to enjoy a little quiet. So long as her mother had any possessions, however, Hortense should be mistress of her own fate. Grief and happiness alike they would share. Let her take courage. It was needed by both.²

Whilst Joséphine was making her involuntary retreat, Marie Louise had arrived at Compiègne, and the

¹ *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, t. ii. pp. 300-1.

² *Ibid.* t. ii. pp. 202-3.

Emperor, to the exclusion of every other consideration and to the exasperation of spectators, was wholly engrossed in his bride. "Louis, occupied in versifying, makes no complaint; Pauline is enraged; Hortense weeps; Catherine (Jérôme's wife) is indignant, and Jérôme exasperated to the point of desiring to leave."¹ Caroline, high in her brother's favour, was content. By virtue, no doubt, of this same favour, she succeeded in obtaining an exemption from a distasteful duty exacted from the other Imperial Princesses, when, the civil marriage having taken place at Saint-Cloud, the religious ceremony was performed in Paris on April 2. On that occasion, Hortense, in conjunction with the Queens of Spain and Westphalia and the Princesses Elisa and Pauline, consented to bear the train of the woman by whom her mother had been supplanted. The ceremony must have put a last touch to a period of humiliation and sorrow. At a later date she recalled that day and her own compliance, with the bitterness of shame and self-reproach, and forestalled posterity in pronouncing a just sentence upon her conduct. It was with grief and with remorse that, as she told Lucien Bonaparte's wife, she looked back upon it. "I ought never," she said, "to have submitted to what was exacted from me. It will be a blot upon my memory."²

She was right. The strange ascendancy exercised by her stepfather over those with whom he was brought

¹ *Napoléon et sa famille* (F. Masson), t. v. p. 28.

² Iung, *Mémoires de Lucien Bonaparte*.



From a picture by Rouget. Photo by Neurdin Frères.

THE MARRIAGE OF NAPOLEON AND MARIE LOUISE.

into contact had led her to acquiesce in a demand which should never have been made, and which he would have found it difficult to enforce. By April 11—Louis had started some days earlier—she had again bowed to his will, and had set out, a melancholy and reluctant traveller, on her way to Holland, taking with her her elder child, the little Louis remaining behind in France.

CHAPTER XVI

1810—1811

Hortense in Holland for the last time—At Plombières—Louis' abdication—Charles de Flahault—Visit to Aix—Birth of the King of Rome—And of the future Duc de Morny.

HAD anything been wanting to increase the Queen's dread of returning to a country where, in addition to the usual domestic discomfort, she had been overtaken by the first overwhelming sorrow of her life, it would have been supplied by the knowledge that her husband's reluctance to resume so much as the semblance of existence in common had been no less great than her own. Both had submitted to the decree of the Emperor, and each was aware that such was the case. It was true that she was received on her arrival with due formalities and with the respect owed to the Sovereign's wife, addresses of welcome and congratulation being, with the King's permission, addressed to her. But in the interior of the palace husband and wife lived apart, lonely, hostile, and unhappy, Louis having gone so far as to cause the doors of communication between their apartments to be walled up. Under compulsion, he had consented to receive his wife under his roof ;

he took care to make the limits of his compliance clear to all.

The ordeal implied by this condition of affairs was not to be prolonged, nor was Hortense's residence in the country of which she was the nominal Queen destined to be lengthy. Early in July Louis' abdication put an end to the existence of any duty, real or imaginary, requiring her to make it her home ; and even before that event she had temporarily left the country to seek the waters of Plombières. The period spent at the Hague was one of the profoundest discouragement, and her dejection is reflected in the answers sent by Joséphine to her letters.

At first it is clear that her mother was making a last attempt to assume a sanguine tone ; and early in May, when Hortense was already in bad health, she is found expressing a hope that reads like irony that the King will, by his care and attachment, contribute to his wife's recovery. Each day, adds the mother, Hortense will show more and more how deserving she is of them.¹

There appears to have been a conspiracy in the Imperial family to convince the unhappy couple of their good fortune ; and the Emperor's congratulations had been offered at an earlier date. "I am assured," he wrote to his stepdaughter, "that you are pleased with the King and with Holland. This is a great pleasure to me." Hortense was far from being pleased with either the one or the other, and any gratification Napoleon might derive from a conviction that it was

¹ *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, t. ii. p. 305.

otherwise must have been short-lived. By the middle of May Joséphine, at any rate, was aware of the true condition of affairs. Hortense had evidently made no attempt at concealment, and, grieved at the spirit of self-abandonment she displayed, the Empress wrote to remind her of the ties binding her to life, and to address to her gentle reproaches for her readiness to contemplate with so much calm the idea of leaving her mother alone in her unhappiness. Let her speak frankly to the King as to seeking the waters—Hortense had been suffering from fever, and the inevitable remedy of waters had been suggested—and he would not refuse her what was necessary to her health.¹

Times were changed since last the King and Queen had together inhabited the Hague, and Louis had now probably as little desire to keep his wife in Holland as she had to remain there. In June Hortense, though she was unaware of it, had quitted the country for ever, and was able, from her old resort, Plombières, to report an improvement in her condition. Joséphine, returned to Malmaison, had also news to communicate as the result of an interview with Napoleon, which must have gone far to cheer her. It was the Emperor's iron hand alone that had forced and kept the ill-matched couple together ; now, displeased with Louis, and foreseeing that the present state of affairs in Holland could not endure, he was at last showing a disposition to permit them to part.

¹ *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, t. ii. p. 309.

"I spoke to him of your position," wrote Joséphine on June 14; "he listened with interest. He is of opinion that you should not go back to Holland, the King not having conducted himself as he ought. Your health and what you have done was a sacrifice proving to the Emperor and to your husband's family how great was your desire to please them. The Emperor's view is that you should take the waters for the necessary time, that you should afterwards write to your husband that the advice of the doctor is that you should live for some time in a warm climate, and that you are consequently going to your brother in Italy. As to your son [the younger child], the Emperor will give orders that he is not to leave France."¹

The disputes between Louis and his brother becoming more and more embittered, the King recognised the fact that one course alone offered a solution of the difficulty. That course was abdication. By the first days of July he had determined to take it; vacating the throne, in a formula which has been considered to contain a direct insult to his wife, "in favour of our beloved son Napoleon Louis, and in his default, in favour of his brother, Charles Louis Napoleon." On the night of July 2 he left the palace, never to return, accompanied by three companions and a dog.

Hortense was at Plombières when the step was taken. The amendment in her health had not lasted, and on July 3 Joséphine was writing that had she known how ill she had been she would have gone

¹ *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, t. ii. pp. 316-7.

to act as her nurse, adding the suggestion that she should now join her at Aix or arrange a meeting in Switzerland. "Let me see you," entreated the mother. "Alone, forsaken, far from all who belong to me, and amongst strangers, judge how great is my sadness, and how much I need your presence."¹

Before the meeting of mother and daughter, the change in Hortense's future prospects was to become public. Louis had not informed his wife of a decision affecting her fortunes scarcely less than his own ; but the tidings reached her through the *gouvernante* of her son, almost at the same moment that a courier arrived with letters from the Emperor, conveying the intelligence. Louis' abdication in favour of the little Napoleon Louis was naturally treated by his brother as waste paper—an empty protest against the sequel he must have anticipated. On July 8—not a week after the King's flight—the Emperor had affixed his signature to the deed formally uniting Holland to France, and there was no further question of the succession of the little Grand Duke. Of the view likely to be taken by Hortense there could be no question. The annexation, Napoleon wrote to her mother, would have the advantage of emancipating the Queen. "That unfortunate girl," he added, "will come to Paris with her son, the Grand Duc de Berg, and that will render her perfectly happy."²

A letter addressed by Hortense to Napoleon, dated

¹ *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, t. ii. p. 321.

² *Ibid.* t. ii. p. 165.

July 10, proves that he had rightly interpreted her sentiments.

"Sire," she wrote, "I have had no courier from Holland, only a letter from Madame de Boubest [Madame Boubers, the Prince's *gouvernante*] announcing the King's departure. I add this letter to my own. I was about to send it to your Majesty when your courier arrived, and to ask you what I ought to do, for I will never do anything but what pleases you. I am sending M. de Marmold to find the Prince and to bring him to me, since your Majesty permits it. I should not have been well enough to go as far as Lâcken. Still, if your Majesty makes a point of it, I am better, and will do what will be agreeable to you. The thought of living quietly near you is what will make me happiest, and I beg you to believe such will always be the desire of your daughter, HORTENSE."¹

Acting upon Napoleon's instructions, she forwarded the formal communications he dictated to the Dutch authorities; whilst the Grand Duke, Napoleon Louis, by a change of plan the reason for which does not appear, was forthwith removed to Paris, where his reception by his uncle at Saint-Cloud was attended with a certain amount of ceremony.

"Come, my son," the Emperor said, taking the child into his arms, "I will be your father. You lose nothing. Your father's conduct grieves me to the heart. Illness alone explains it. When you are

¹ *Archives*, quoted in *Les secrets des Bonaparte* (Nauroy), pp. 156-7.

grown to be a man, you will pay his debt and your own.”¹

The boy, with his brother, was settled for the present near the Palace of Saint-Cloud ; the hôtel in the rue Cérutti and the château of Saint-Leu being taken possession of, by the orders of the Emperor, in their mother's name. Before the end of the month an ample income had been assigned to Hortense, on her own behalf and that of her children ; her separation from Louis had been authorised, and the guardianship of her sons assured to her. Of the ex-King strangely little notice had been taken. He was ignored rather than blamed, the responsibility for the line of conduct he had pursued being laid upon the condition of his health. But he was, nevertheless, so far as any right to dispose either of his property or his children was concerned, placed as it were outside the law.

Meantime, Hortense was eagerly awaited at Aix. The Emperor, it is true, had written to Joséphine in the expectation that her daughter was to be looked for in Paris. But health, a desire to see her mother, or, it might be, other reasons, had decided her upon deferring her return thither ; and the Empress was writing that her lodging—"the largest house available, where all are small"—was prepared. A visitor, Charles de Flahault, who had come from Plombières, had brought news of an unsatisfactory nature of the Queen. "She has been more ill than we thought," wrote Madame de

¹ *Moniteur*, quoted in *Napoléon et sa famille* (Masson), t. v. p. 282 ; *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. ii.

Rémusat to her husband. "The Empress is not uneasy—she believes her to be better. It is a chord I dare not touch." ¹

The messenger, here mentioned for the first time, is believed to have played an important part in the life of the dispossessed Queen, now, at twenty-seven, separated from her husband. The son of a Comte de Flahault who died by the guillotine, he was a young colonel attached to the État-Major of the Prince de Neuchâtel. Tall, slight, and good-looking, he was popular in Paris; but Napoleon had never liked him. The qualities he possessed were not those commending a man to the Emperor. Intelligent? he would say contemptuously—every one had as much intelligence. He sang well? A fine gift in a soldier, who was almost always hoarse. *Joli garçon?* that was what women cared about. For his part, he saw nothing out of the common in him. ²

Yet, discerning no special merit in the young man, the Emperor had not refused him advancement. When he had been relegated to a German garrison, he had received permission to return to France; he had filled successive military posts, and had been promoted, before he was twenty-five, on the field of battle, to be Colonel. He was Eugène's close friend, and there can be little doubt that he was to become more than a friend to Eugène's sister. It is from this summer that M. Masson, who has included in his valuable and

¹ *Lettres de Madame de Rémusat*, t. ii. p. 334.

² *Mémoires de la Duchesse d'Abrantès*, t. iv. p. 306.

exhaustive study of the Bonaparte family an account of Louis' wife, dates the beginning of the connection between Flahault and Hortense. The historian is careful to distinguish the tie he believes existed from the intrigues constantly carried on by Napoleon's sisters. In the Queen's case, "c'est un engagement sérieux où l'on trouve des sentiments profonds et de la part de Hortense quelque chose du définitif d'une union raisonnée, contractée après réflexion et devant durer la vie."¹

In the opinion of the same writer, the *liaison*, short-lived as it eventually proved, was probably tacitly accepted as a species of morganatic marriage; and, as evidence of the Emperor's connivance at a fact of which he could not be ignorant, he cites the promotion from this time forward bestowed upon Flahault. In December, 1812, he became General of Brigade, Napoleon's aide-de-camp in the following January, General of Division and Count of the Empire in October, and Commander of the Legion in March, 1814. This was the man, and this his record, past and future, generally believed to have been the father of the future Duc de Morny, the adventurer quoted as saying, "Je nomme mon père Comte; j'appelle ma fille Princesse; je dis à mon frère Sire; j'ai le titre de Duc, et tout cela est naturel."²

The arrival of the visitor was welcomed at Aix. "Our society is pleasant," wrote Madame de Rémusat.

¹ *Napoléon et sa famille*, t. vi. p. 287.

² *Les Bonaparte à Montpellier* (Grasset Morel), p. 241.

"Charles de Flahault puts life into it. He has more resources and talks better than I should have believed. He is gay, sings well, and we are content."¹

The Empress's household was in need of any cheering element that could be secured. No fault could be found with her behaviour. Displaying the utmost good taste and tact, she had accepted her new position after a fashion calling for nothing but praise, spoke of the Emperor in the proper terms, and in negating the wish of the civic authorities to show her any special attention, had done so without apparent effort or constraint. "Rest," she would say, with a manifest endeavour to make the best of the situation—"rest sometimes takes the place of happiness." Nevertheless, it was impossible that she should not be melancholy, and the news from Holland had supplied an additional cause of anxiety in the uncertainty overhanging the future of her daughter and grandchildren. It was, therefore, no cheerful atmosphere by which Hortense was surrounded when, during the last days of July, she came to join her mother.

Nor was she calculated to add to the gaiety of the forlorn little Court. It might have been expected that, freed from the bondage of an uncongenial domestic life, the possession of her children secured to her, and a return to France in view, she would have looked on, if not with rejoicing, at least without apprehension. But, whether owing to a low state

¹ *Lettres de Madame de Rémusat*, t. ii, p. 335.

of health, or to other causes, her spirits showed no sign of recovery. It may be that, in closing the chapter of her life associated with Louis, she was oppressed by a sense, if not of remorse, of failure. Pale, thin, and depressed, she was always on the verge of tears, without being able to assign any reason for them; and Madame de Rémusat, with the boldness of an old friend, took upon her to remonstrate. The Queen's misfortune, she ventured to remind her, in reference to the loss of her throne, was in reality no misfortune at all. Her heart did not suffer by it. Her children were in France, well cared for by the Emperor. She would join them there shortly, and was at present with her mother. She must eat and sleep, and leave the rest to God and the Emperor.

Hortensé did not resent the lady-in-waiting's plain speech. "She smiled at my little harangue," wrote her monitor, reporting the matter to her husband, "and I think she believes me to be right. Eh! *mon Dieu*, let us have no ills that we have not. 'God protect us from our friends,' says the Portuguese proverb. I will add, God protect us from ourselves."¹

Madame de Rémusat's protest perhaps did good. Though still *languissante*, in August the Queen had improved, and at her house, in a charming situation outside the town, she gave a *fête*, with a *déjeuner al fresco*, and a little dramatic performance. By October

¹ *Lettres de Madame de Rémusat*, t. ii. p. 369.

she had returned to her children in France; whilst her mother carried out her project of a Swiss tour. A plan had been formed for a longer absence; but Joséphine had conceived the apprehension that her permanent exile from France was in contemplation, and feared to facilitate it. Hortense had been employed by her to ascertain the Emperor's wishes, and the letter in which he expressed them, if not definitely condemning her to the fate she dreaded, makes it clear that it was not expedient that his former wife should, at the present moment, be found in the neighbourhood of Paris. It was considered unadvisable that she should be near at hand now that the birth of an heir was expected; lest, in case of misfortune, popular suspicion should unreasonably attach to her;¹ nor had Hortense, as her mother's representative, been at first successful in obtaining so much as an authorisation for the Empress to pass the winter in her country home at Navarre. "Hortense, whom I have seen, will have told you what I think," wrote Napoleon on October 1. "Go and visit your son this winter. Return next year to the waters of Aix, or else remain at Navarre for the spring."² The wish of the Emperor to keep her at a distance was plain; but it was found in the end impossible to refuse her permission to pass the winter upon the property he had bestowed upon her, and eventually she obtained leave to return to France. The Empress's household had fully shared her dread

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Avrillon*, t. ii. p. 251.

² *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, t. ii.

of an indefinite term of banishment, even though the Court of the Viceroy had been indicated as their place of honourable exile, and so great was their relief when it appeared that such was not to be their fate, that the courier bringing the Emperor's letter was received with delirious joy.¹

Hortense, meanwhile, re-domiciled in Paris, was resuming her old habits, and recovering her spirits. Life, indeed, compared with her nine years of marriage, must have begun to smile upon her. Freedom—the negative freedom afforded by separation from her husband—was hers; her children were in her hands; her home was in the place where she would have chosen to make it. The large income allotted to her secured her immunity from financial cares; and though Louis, learning in his place of retreat in the Austrian dominions the arrangements made by the Emperor, forbade his wife to accept the provision thus conferred upon her and his sons, and to rest content with what was derived from their private property, “la reine Hortense,” writes Napoleon's secretary, “se vit dans la nécessité de désobéir.”

Thus, varied by visits to her mother at Navarre, the winter passed cheerfully away. The birth of the long-desired heir was expected in the spring, and Court and city kept holiday. On March 20 the event so eagerly anticipated took place, and the King of Rome was born.

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Avrillon*, t. ii. p. 255.

² *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. ii. p. 371.

The populace, waiting "que le ciel eût dit oui," imagined that they had received an answer ; all Paris rejoiced ; the future of the Empire was, it seemed, secured ; Napoleon was no longer childless. "So great and so little," the newborn infant held the future in his hands.

With regard to the sentiments with which Hortense viewed the event, it would perhaps be overmuch to expect of a mother that she should look on at the exclusion of her sons from the chance of an unrivalled inheritance with unmixed satisfaction. But the Queen, if any one, was capable of accepting the change in their prospects with equanimity ; and a magnificent gift of Gobelins tapestries, valued at eighty thousand francs, made her by the Emperor at this time, testified to his unaltered affection.

A correspondence of some months later, however, indicates that her reckless expenditure, as well as her mother's, contrasting strangely with the frugal habits of his high-born wife, was a source of some vexation and irritation to her stepfather, and that he took measures to put a limit to their extravagance.

"Take occasion to see the Empress Joséphine," he wrote to the Comte de Mollien at the Treasury, "and make her understand that I hope her household will be more economically managed. . . . The Empress Marie Louise has only 100,000 crowns, and pays her bills weekly, depriving herself of dresses and imposing privations upon herself that she may have no debts. . . . Pay nothing further to Queen Hortense . . .

without asking me. Speak to her intendant, that he may put order into her house.”¹

Whatever may have been Napoleon's minor causes of annoyance as to his stepdaughter's domestic arrangements, the fact that before his letter to Mollien was written she had been chosen to represent the Queen of Naples as sponsor to the King of Rome at his christening in Notre Dame constituted another mark of the Emperor's favour.

Of her movements during these months there is scanty record, of her condition of mind still less. On July 4 she parted from her children, sending them to Saint-Cloud, whence they were later to go to Malmaison to be consigned to their grandmother's care, the following weeks being spent by the Queen at Aix in Savoy, and at a house lately acquired by Joséphine in the neighbourhood of Geneva. In September a letter to Madame Boucheporn, in charge of the Princes, stated that she was meditating a short journey to see her brother; that she would be in Paris from October 10 to October 15; whilst after the 20th letters were not to be sent to her, as she would be moving about. Should the boys be sick, Lavallette would dispatch a courier to let her know.² To the same month of September belongs a letter from her mother, showing that it was at this date that the children were to be transferred to her care. Toys, Joséphine wrote, had been already laid in—she would give them all they

¹ *Lettres inédites de Napoléon*, t. ii. p. 175.

² *Napoléon et sa famille* (Masson), t. viii.

could want. "For sweetmeats, be at rest—they shall have none."¹ But as to Hortense's plans, the Empress's letter affords no indication.

The *Journal de Paris*, however, noted her arrival in Paris on October 10 ; and it is further known that on the 22nd the birth of a boy was registered there, under the name of Charles Auguste Louis Joseph, son of Louise Auguste Coralie Fleury, wife of Auguste Jean Hyacinthe Demorny. It is said that it was this child who, placed by Charles de Flahault in the charge of his mother, Madame de Souza—married for the second time to the Portuguese Ambassador—became the future Duc de Morny, reputed brother of Napoleon III. It is further stated that the Demorny named as the father was an old friend of Hortense, a Chevalier of St. Louis, dead in 1814, who, for a consideration, consented to lend his name.²

The evidence is circumstantial ; it is not conclusive ; nor can actual proof of the generally accepted story be adduced. If the conclusions of the reader should be adverse to Hortense, it must be repeated that, in judging her, contemporary morality should be taken into account. To those in whose eyes marriage is sacred and indissoluble, every connection contracted in spite of it is alike a breach of morality. But it should be remembered that only the absence of what she may have regarded as a mere legal formality rendered her, in the eyes of the world, less justified in

¹ *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, t. ii. p. 346.

² *Les secrets des Bonaparte* (Ch. Nauroy), p. 136.

contracting fresh ties than Napoleon, the birth of whose heir had just been celebrated with so much pomp, or than his brother Jérôme, forced to discard his first wife, and to whom a Princess had been accorded in her stead. Lucien alone, the *mauvais sujet* of the family, having married the woman he loved, had steadily refused to repudiate her at the Emperor's repeated command, and had forfeited all the advantages to be won by compliance.¹

¹ I find no record of any meetings in later years between the Queen and the child, who afterwards adopted as his armorial bearings the Hortensia flower and the motto *Memento sed tace*.

CHAPTER XVII

1812—1813

Approaching disaster—A court ball—Louis and his son—Hortense at Aix—The training of her children—The Grand Duc de Berg's illness—His mother's alarm—Hortense and Marie Louise—The Malet riot—Russian disasters—Louis' proposals—Hortense at Paris and at Aix—Death of Duroc—Of Madame de Broc—Louis and Eugène de Beauharnais.

WITH his marriage to a daughter of a great reigning house, still more with the birth of the son for whom he had waited and longed, Napoleon's fortunes had reached their height. Henceforth they were to decline. The year 1812 was to witness his first great failure in the Russian campaign, terminated by the disastrous retreat from Moscow. Europe was to look on, with eagerness open or disguised, at the reverses of the man by whom most of it had been subjugated. His enemies were to take courage, his friends—many of them—to grow cold, whilst the women who loved him waited trembling for what was to follow.

Yet the year opened under favourable auspices. Treaties of peace with Austria and Prussia had been signed; and though relations with Russia were becoming increasingly strained, there was

no immediate cause for anxiety. By December Hortense had resumed her attendance at Court, and was treated with marked favour both by the Emperor and his wife. A prominent figure at the palace, she was included in the weekly family dinner, and filled her accustomed place on more public occasions, a quadrille—*le quadrille des Incas*—led by her during the Carnival being attended with so much success that it was repeated by the Emperor's orders the following year. In the arrangement of this particular dance there had, nevertheless, been trouble. Drawn from amongst the members, past or present, of her household, some of those taking part in the performance desired modifications in their costumes ; others entreated to be permitted to execute *pas seuls* ; and the Queen was urged to introduce a compliment to the "conqueror of the world." Moved neither by supplications nor argument, she firmly refused to allow any change in the dresses, designed, as they had been, by the best artists ; skirt-dancing was to be left to the Opéra, where it was in place ; and as for the suggested flattery of the Emperor, it would be in the worst possible taste. "I warn you," she added, "that I will not be made ridiculous. For the rest, no one is obliged to join in my quadrille."¹

Amidst the gaieties of the winter and spring it may be that the evidence of a persistent intention upon her husband's part to maintain his hold upon her elder son and to vindicate his paternal rights was again suggestive of disturbing possibilities in the future.

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i. p. 46.

From his retreat at Gratz Louis was assiduous in keeping up a connection with those to whose care the child was entrusted, and inquired into every detail of his daily life. Sore at heart, and viewing with resentment the injuries, real or imaginary, sustained at the hands of friends and kinsfolk, the existence of the ex-King continued to be that of a morbid invalid. Isolation, combined with physical suffering, had produced a temper of mind far from encouraging to those who might otherwise have shared and alleviated his voluntary exile, and when a general, actuated by devotion to his person, followed him to Gratz, he was met by distrust and insult. Louis was not, he told him, his dupe, and divined the interested motives underlying his fine sentiments.¹

Literature continued to be a resource to the recluse ; and the composition of an autobiographical work of fiction entitled *Marie, ou les peines de l'amour*, into which portraits of both his wife and her cousin Émilie were introduced, was affording an outlet for his egotistic grudges at life. But, engaged as he was in these pursuits and, as ever, engrossed in matters of health, his love for the child to whom he can have been little more than a name was real and genuine, and the letters addressed to him are full of anxious affection. "I know not," he wrote, "when I shall see you ; but even if I do not see you, it does not prevent me from loving you tenderly—it is a reason to love you the more ;"²

¹ *Mémoires de Thiebault*, t. v. p. 340.

² Quoted in *Napoléon et sa famille* (F. Masson), t. vii. pp. 127-8.

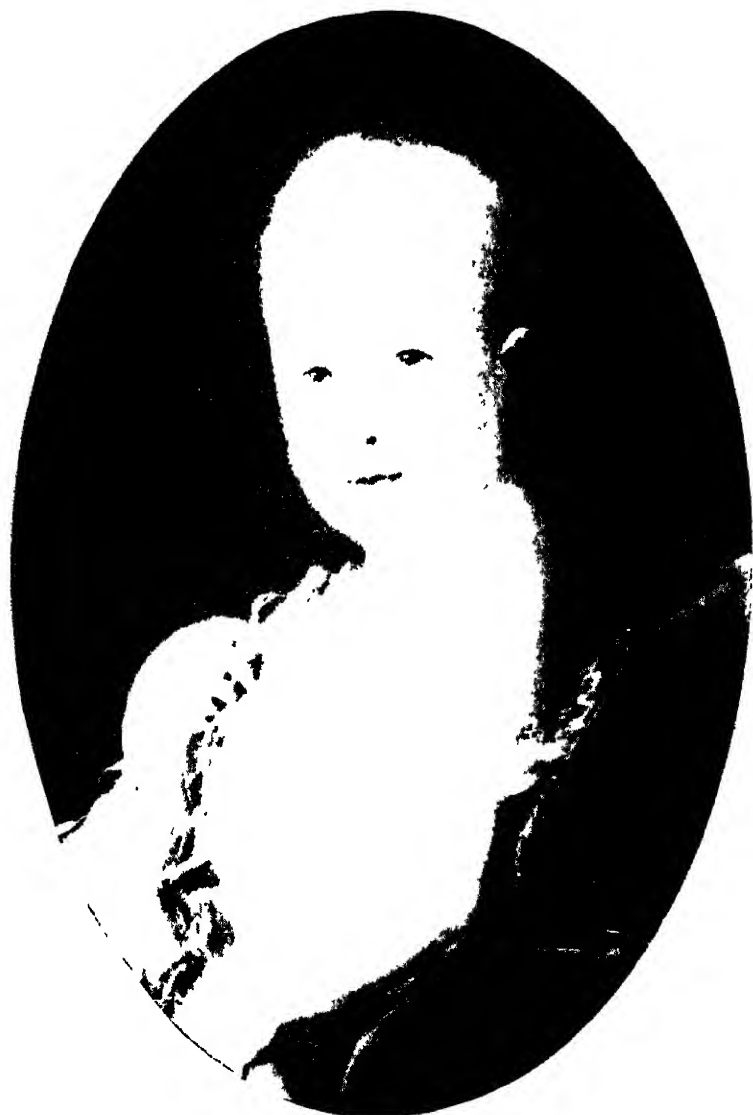
and again and again the brooding solicitude of a father powerless to enforce his wishes is shown.

For the present Hortense could count upon the Emperor to secure her from any danger of practical interference with the management of her children; and Napoleon's joy in the possession of a son may have rendered him still more sympathetic towards a mother's rights. More than Court entertainments, home life was now affording relaxation for his leisure hours. At the moment that a rupture with the Czar was imminent and cares of State were pressing upon him with unusual force, it was his favourite amusement to watch—Marie Louise looking placidly on—the attempts made by the King of Rome to walk alone, greeting the child's frequent collapses with bursts of laughter. "The trio," says his secretary, ". . . offered the spectacle of a *bourgeois ménage*, united by ties of the sweetest familiarity."¹

In May Emperor and Empress left Saint-Cloud, to pay a visit to Dresden, where a meeting had been arranged with Marie Louise's family. By the middle of July she had returned alone to France, Napoleon going to take his place at the head of his army.

Part of the summer was spent by Joséphine and Hortense together at Aix-la-Chapelle. But the weather was unpropitious, and Hortense melancholy, and inclined to compare the streets of the little town unfavourably with her shady home at Saint-Leu. It was at this time that—in the absence perhaps of other

¹ *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. iii. p. 4.



THE KING OF ROME.

From a picture by F. Gérard. Photo by Neurdin Frères.

occupation—Madame de Rémusat describes her as taking part in her children's studies and endeavouring thus to repair the deficiencies of her education. Whilst their mother was a sharer in their lessons, Albert de Rémusat was the companion of the Princes in their games, and Hortense seems to have been wise enough to establish a certain equality between the playmates, refusing to allow the guest to be chidden for having so far forgotten the reverence due to an infant Monseigneur as to have given her younger boy a blow. The culprit, the Queen's indulgence notwithstanding, was not without his private misgivings. "He looked at me when he had done it," said his mother, reporting the incident, "to see what I should say. On my return I gave him a little lesson, which he understood"—to the effect, no doubt, that whether or not Imperial Princes were in the wrong, they must not be forcibly convinced of it.¹

Hortense's method of dealing with Albert de Rémusat's offence was no isolated instance of her system of training. In her relations with her children she was at her best. Notwithstanding her passionate affection, it was not her habit to over-indulge them. Recalling the days of his childhood,² Napoleon III. afterwards contrasted the caresses of his grandmother, and her repetitions of his *bons mots*, with his mother's correction of his faults. At Malmaison he and his brother ruled as masters. Hortense's educational theory

¹ *Lettres de Madame de Rémusat*, t. ii. pp. 419-20.

² *Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 70.

was a different one. "Their high position will spoil them only too much," she would say, "if care is not taken that it does not. I wish to make distinguished men of them, and I will not have them given the defects of greatness. I desire, on the contrary, that the idea of their rank may force them to become better men ; and it is by constant self-forgetfulness in the service of others that one becomes their superior." ¹

"If you possessed nothing in the world, and were alone in it, what would you do, Napoleon," she once asked the elder boy, "pour te tirer d'affaire ?"

"I would become a soldier," was the answer of the child, "and would fight so well that I should be made an officer."

"And you, Louis," his mother asked the younger prince, not yet five years old, "what would you do for a livelihood ?"

"I would sell violets, like the little boy at the door of the Tuileries, from whom we buy them every day," was the answer of the future Emperor.

"Do not laugh," Hortense bade her *lectrice*, who reports the scene. "I am giving them a lesson. The misfortune of princes is to believe that all is their due, . . . and that human privation can never touch them. Then, when misfortune comes, they are taken by surprise, are terrified, and are always incapable of rising to their destiny." ²

Hortense was still the same as when, in her girlhood,

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i. p. 212.

² *Ibid.* t. i. pp. 287-8,

she had anticipated the possibility of being called upon to earn her bread by means of her artistic gifts ; and if the training of her children betrayed a touch of the pedanticism common in her day, it was at all events free from the vulgar pretension of the *parvenu*. When, two years later, the boys were addressed by the conquerors of France as " Monseigneur " and " Your Imperial Highness," they listened with astonishment, the titles having been eschewed in their mother's house. " It was her object to convince them that they were nothing, except what they were worth in themselves."

Madame de Rémusat sketched a portrait of the Queen, as she was at this date, for her husband's benefit, interesting as evidence of the attraction Hortense possessed for those with whom she was brought into personal relations.

" I cannot say how much charm I find in her intimacy," wrote her friend. " Her character is truly angelic, and she is quite different from what she is believed to be. She is so sincere [*si vraie*], so pure, so perfectly ignorant of evil, there is in the depth of her soul so gentle a melancholy, she appears so much resigned to the future, that it is impossible not to carry away a very special impression of her." ¹

In spite of the gaiety which had been, and continued to be at times, one of her characteristics, there was something intangible about the Queen leading those who loved her to feel uneasily that she was marked

¹ *Lettres de Madame de Rémusat*, t. ii. p. 441.

out for misfortune. When her elder boy was taken ill even the level-headed lady-in-waiting, though wrongly convinced that the malady was nothing but a childish disorder, was troubled by a presentiment of evil. "Some people," she observed, "are made almost exclusively for suffering, and she seems called upon earth to endure these sort of trials."¹

Her children were her vulnerable point. When, on one occasion, they had been sent from Paris to visit their grandmother, and were later in returning from Malmaison than had been expected, their mother, as she sat at dinner with her household, could scarcely disguise her anxiety, nor was it until the sound of little feet overhead was audible that she breathed freely.

"It is true," she admitted gently, when those present ventured to point out how unnecessary had been her alarm. "I do not deceive myself. I have only this one joy upon earth, and I am always afraid lest it should be taken away."²

Though her affections centred strongly upon those bound to her by ties of family and kindred, her sympathies were not confined to that narrow circle, and she was ready to participate, to what might be regarded as an exaggerated degree, in the sorrows of her friends.

"I share the regrets you bestow upon poor Caulincourt," wrote Joséphine in the course of this year.

¹ *Lettres de Madame de Rémusat*, t. ii. p. 441.

² *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i. pp. 76-7.

"They are very just, and you will find it difficult to console his unhappy mother. But, my dear Hortense, do not give way to your sadness. Everything grieves you too deeply. You have already suffered sufficiently from spiritual ills [*maux de l'âme*]. Dismiss them, and I am persuaded you will recover your health. Sensibility does the most harm."¹

Joséphine was probably right, and one recognises in her advice an echo of the constant injunctions—"sois gaie, sois raisonnable"—which had been the burden of Napoleon's letters in days gone by. Yet sympathetic as Hortense was, by disposition and habit, she laboured under the disability—not altogether uncommon—of a difficulty in making what she felt known. Strongly affected by the misfortunes befalling those around her, she was at a loss to express it in words, and only when deeds were necessary did the sufferers discover the extent to which she participated in their grief. "Always gentle, gracious, and indulgent to the last degree," admits Mademoiselle Cochelet, "she was thought to be indifferent, because she showed nothing."² Hortense was acutely conscious of the defect; and when, later on, she lost a friend under melancholy circumstances, she reproached herself bitterly for her habitual reserve.

"I have an ugly character [*un vilain caractère*]," she said. "I am sure Adèle never knew how dear she was to me. I do not know how to say what I feel."³

¹ *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, t. ii. pp. 310-11.

² *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i. p. 32.

³ *Ibid.* t. i. p. 92.

It was during her stay at Aix that Prince Napoleon developed scarlet fever, giving rise in his mother to an agony of alarm; and though the period for which he was considered to be in danger was short, the contingency of his death was freely canvassed in the Bonaparte family, as well as the question whether or not it would be advisable to allow his brother the reversion of the Grand Duchy of Berg. "I am persuaded," wrote the Queen of Westphalia to Jérôme, "that you will agree with me as to the impossibility of depriving the last of the Princes of it without dishonour to his parents."

The Emperor wrote kindly and promptly, expressing his regret at the child's illness, and his satisfaction in learning, two days later, that danger was passed. "I had counted on a rapid cure," he added, "knowing how quickly a mother takes alarm." Marie Louise, in a letter to the patient himself, sent affectionate messages to Hortense "from a sister who loves her tenderly."

Hortense's private and special apprehensions had been removed by her son's speedy recovery. But this autumn, if tidings of actual defeat had not yet reached Paris, the hearts of many must have been weighted with misgivings. Eugène, ever his sister's idol, was with the army, and most families had given hostages to fate. A common anxiety was drawing together those whose interests centred on the same point, and was more and more cementing the affectionate intimacy between Marie Louise and her predecessor's daughter.

"You give me fresh life in saying that you have read the Emperor's letters to the Empress," wrote Joséphine. "It is very good of her to have shown them to you. I am infinitely grateful to her for the affection she displays towards you. I own I was always very uneasy."¹

In October Paris was startled by an abortive attempt at insurrection. A vague sense that Napoleon's fortunes were on the wane may have encouraged the hopes of those hostile to his government, and a report of his death had likewise been circulated. With General Malet, who had before been concerned in more than one such enterprise, at their head, the rioters had been momentarily masters of the situation. The Treasury and hôtel de Ville had been seized, and Savary, the Minister, with the Prefect of Police, imprisoned. The success of the insurgents was short-lived, and on October 23 Hortense was able to inform her brother that all was quiet, adding, on the following day, that Paris was beginning to ridicule its own fears—"they laugh very much, which is not gay for the persons laughed at." What she did not dwell upon was "the profound impression made on France and on Europe by the audacity with which an obscure individual, without money, without credit, alone and without accomplices, had flung himself out of prison to attempt a stroke which had been on the point of succeeding; his facility in persuading the troops that the Emperor was dead, that the Empire was in consequence at an end; the

¹ *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, t. ii. p. 367.

passive submission of the municipal authorities to his injunctions ; and lastly, the forgetfulness shown of the King of Rome and his mother.”¹

The disorganisation consequent upon a mere rumour of the Emperor's death was indeed well calculated to give rise, in observers who reflected upon it, to a certain amount of uneasiness. But in her relief at the collapse of the attempt Hortense would not seem to have been amongst these. A letter of the 25th, in good spirits, addressed again to the Viceroy, and containing a more detailed account of the affair, is not uncharacteristic of the writer.

“I went yesterday to Saint-Cloud,” she told her brother. “I wanted to kiss that poor little King of Rome, whom I found very well. The Empress was wonderfully well, and believed it to have been nothing but an affair of *brigands*. Happily, she had not feared for her son. She told me she would come and pass the day at Saint-Leu to-morrow, and I am hastening to arrange everything. . . . I was at Malmaison this morning, and found our mother very well, and enchanted with your family, of whom we talked much. She was trembling at this *équipée* in Paris, and—as each one makes his own plans—she would have gone, she told me, to be near the King of Rome, had he run any risk. It was, above all, the rumour of the Emperor's death which spread consternation in Paris. Even those who sometimes complain were conscious of the calamity that would overtake them.

¹ *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. iii, p. 99.

“Happily people are now much reassured, and begin to laugh at three men in prison having succeeded in taking possession of all the police. The poor Minister of Police is much pitied. Women, however, say that, were he not so much occupied in learning every woman’s intrigue for the amusement of the Emperor, he would have known all this, and it is far more necessary. But all the world pities him, and are very uneasy till it is known how the Emperor will take it. There is no doubt that they nearly gained possession of the King of Rome, and that makes one tremble. My private little plan was to send my children to the first fortified town, like Péronne. *Ce nom de Pucelle* suited me. I should have tried to take the King there, and the Empress; and, buying much corn, to shut myself up in the city and wait till they came to deliver us. Each builds his own castle. Do you approve of mine? For the rest, on occasions of this kind, a head is necessary, and I see nobody who has one near the Empress.”¹

The excitement of the incident, when danger, had there been any, was at an end, may possibly have afforded a relief from the wearing anxiety as to the result of the Russian campaign. Difficult as it is to realise in the present day, Paris had been far from entertaining any suspicion of the actual state of affairs in the east, nor was it until thirty-six hours before the return of the Emperor to his capital that the long silence as to the movements of the army was

¹ Iung, *Mémoires de Lucien Bonaparte*, t. iii. pp. 168-70.

broken. Tidings were then brought of the great retreat forming one of the most painful chapters of military history and the prelude to the fall of the Empire.

Demain, ô conquérant, c'est Moscou qui s'allume,
La nuit, comme un flambeau.
C'est votre vieille garde au loin jonchant la plaine—
Demain, c'est Waterloo ! demain, c'est Sainte-Hélène !
Demain, c'est le tombeau !

Thus Victor Hugo marked the stages of ruin inaugurated by the campaign of this year. On December 18, unexpectedly and late at night, the Emperor entered the Tuileries. For the first time he had come back defeated.

Nor was the war over. "We will do all you wish—when peace is concluded," Napoleon told Hortense in reply to her suggestion that her present abode did not correspond to the rank and dignity of her son, and that another should be built for him. "When peace was concluded." But when peace came it was no longer a question of fresh honours to be paid to the Bonaparte race. Nevertheless, possibly thus seeking distraction, Hortense continued to find amusement in tracing the plans of the hôtel she hoped one day to see erected ; and the children, gathering up from the floor the drawings she had made, would explain with respect, "C'est le plan de maman."¹

Louis, at a distance, was engaged in schemes of a different nature, destined no more than those of his wife to meet with realisation. It had occurred to

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i. p. 43.

the ex-King that the present moment might find his brother disposed to restore to him the position he had relinquished, and he wrote to propose that he should resume the crown of a country in danger of falling into the hands of the enemy. Though negativing his request, Napoleon's answer was couched in no unkindly terms. Let Louis come to Paris, he said, and he would meet, not an offended brother, but the father who had brought him up.¹

Hortense must have rejoiced that her husband showed no inclination to respond to the invitation. In the meantime, the Emperor's fiat had gone forth : Paris was to be gay ; 1813 was to retrieve the losses of 1812 ; and no diminution of the customary merry-making was to betray fears or misgivings or regrets. " Soie gaie," he had been accustomed to order Joséphine. " Soyez gais," he commanded his Parisians ; and his Parisians did their best to obey. Hortense did her duty with the rest. Eugène was with the army ; Murat had wearied of his share in the campaign and returned to Italy, leaving the chief responsibility to the Prince ; but though care and watching for tidings had told upon his sister's health, it would not have occurred to her to seek in illness or anxiety an excuse for failing to respond to the Emperor's demands. Her house was opened as usual to the guests he wished her to entertain, as well as to some he might not have objected to see excluded. Was it well, asked her chamberlain dubiously, when issuing invitations to a

¹ *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. iii. p. 110.

ball, to bid to it those maimed or disabled in the late war? Would not their presence, rather than answering the Emperor's purpose in causing Paris to forget its misfortunes, serve as a reminder of them? Hortense admitted the justice of the argument; she refused, however, not unnaturally, to erase from her list the names of the victims. She was right; yet it was no wonder that, with its living object-lessons in war, the ball should have proved a melancholy affair; and the Queen, moving amongst her guests and remembering her brother surrounded by perils, cannot have done the honours with a light heart.¹

From Moscow Eugène had written, strangely enough, to ask her to send him songs; and conceiving that the recommendations to prudence she was constantly addressing to him would be more effective in verse, she caused her friends to supply words to which music might be added, in order that, complying with his request, her admonitions might gain additional force.²

Hortense's life at this time was a full one. With her duties in Paris, her home at Saint-Leu, her mother to be visited and cheered at Malmaison, and the many subordinate interests crowding her days, she had few leisure moments. Her toilette in particular, even when dinners at the Tuileries were in question, was conducted with breathless speed. "It will do very well; quick, quick, make haste," she would bid her despairing

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i, p. 33.

² *Ibid.* p. 26.

coiffeur ; whilst his labours were rendered more difficult by the presence of her little sons, who would chase each other under her long hair, passing between her chair and the unfortunate M. Charbonier, standing behind it at the distance necessitated by the unusual length of his material. The hurried performance completed, the Queen would hurry to her carriage, always conducted by the children, carrying her gloves, her cloak and, when she was in court dress, her train ; whilst the *coiffeur*, left behind, would make no secret of his discontent. He was losing his reputation, and—the question every one great and small was asking at the time—what would the Emperor think of him? He would say he did not know his trade !¹

Before Napoleon's departure for the army Hortense spent some days at Trianon. On March 30 she was summoned to the Tuileries to be present when Marie Louise was appointed to fill the post of Regent during her husband's absence. A fortnight later he was gone, and Paris had relinquished the attempt to make merry upon which he had insisted. The Empress at Saint-Cloud, Joséphine at Malmaison, Hortense at Saint-Leu, awaited with breathless anxiety tidings from the army ; and when news of the battle of Lutzen was brought, a wave of rejoicing for a moment blotted out the memory of past defeats, and it seemed that all would be well.

At the Te Deum in honour of the victory Hortense's place was vacant. Her health had been failing

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i. p. 20.

throughout the winter and spring, and she was too ill to be present. Fouché, however—now Duc de Rovigo—took upon himself to remonstrate. The Empress, he said, was in an isolated position, and the Queen must be aware that the Emperor always desired that she should be at his wife's side.

Hortense demurred. Ill and suffering, what use could she be to the Empress? Nevertheless, in deference to the opinion of the Minister of Police, she invited Marie Louise to Saint-Leu, bringing down from Paris the company of the Variétés Théâtre to minister to her amusement. The day was a success. Nevertheless, when the Empress and her train had taken leave, the satisfaction of the woman who was before everything a mother was alloyed. Little Napoleon, contrary to his wont, had been most reluctant to go to bed. Taken unwisely into the confidence of the household, he was aware that a surprise had been prepared for the Queen, and that the actor Brunet was to furnish her with a special and private entertainment he much desired to witness. Being an honourable child, however, he gave no reason for his pertinacity, and submitted at length to be dismissed.

The farce was played with brilliant success. Every one, save the Queen, was enchanted with the performance. Hortense, enlightened as to the motive of the child's persistence, could not share in the general satisfaction.

"I am angry with myself," she said. "I have been thinking all the time of the effort it cost

my boy to go. At his age every impression is so strong.”¹

No improvement taking place in the Queen's health, it was decided, as the year advanced, that she should again seek the benefit to be derived from the waters of Aix, and she proceeded thither, leaving her sons in the charge of their grandmother, who kept her informed as to their well-being. “Be at ease about your children,” Joséphine wrote; “they are perfectly well, with pink and white complexions.” Little Oui-oui, as the youngest was, at this time and much later, nicknamed, had distinguished himself, at five years old, by his tact and courtesy.

“I wish,” he had observed to the Abbé Bertrand, once his mother's teacher at Saint-Germain, and now tutor to her boys—“I wish I could change myself into a little bird. I would fly away at the hour of your lesson, and come back when M. Hase [the German master] arrives.”

“But, Prince,” objected the Abbé, “what you say is not civil to me.”

“Oh!” answered the child, retrieving his blunder with ready grace, “what I say is for the lesson, not for the man.”²

Hortense would be touched, her mother told her, did she know how much her boys thought about her. “I see with pleasure,” she wrote a few weeks later, “that you have not forgotten the years of your

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i. pp. 75-6.

² *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, t. ii. p. 376.

childhood, and you show goodness to your mother in recalling them. I was right to make such good children happy—they have well rewarded me for it since. Your children will do the same by you—their heart is like your own; they will never cease to love you.”¹

An event had taken place after the battle of Würtschen which must have recalled to Hortense’s memory another debt—not of gratitude—owed to her mother. This was the death of Duroc, her first love, now Duc de Frioul. The blow struck Napoleon hard. Seeking the house where the wounded man had been carried, the master he had served so well sat for a quarter of an hour leaning his head upon the right hand of the dying Duke. The last farewells had been taken, the last words spoken. At length, true to the end to his character, the silence was broken by Duroc, begging the Emperor not to sadden himself by remaining longer a witness of the scene; and with a final word of parting, Napoleon withdrew, to mourn in solitude the man whose loss he is said to have most regretted.²

Hortense regretted him, too, but for the sake of the Emperor, and of the wife, become her friend, he left behind him, rather than for her own. “None can replace Duroc with the Emperor,” she said. “Ah! when will there be peace? Will all our friends end by perishing thus?”³

¹ *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine*, t. ii. p. 389.

² *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. iii. p. 135.

³ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i. p. 79.

At Aix death was to come nearer to Hortense, and to remove the one of her household for whom her affection seems to have been the deepest. This was her *dame du palais*, Madame de Broc, a niece of Madame Campan's who, as Adèle Auguié, had been her schoolmate at Saint-Germain. A widow of twenty-four or twenty-five, her love for the Queen, some six years older, was great, and her sudden and tragic death ended a long friendship. An expedition had been made with the object of viewing the cascade of Grésy, for which purpose it was necessary to cross a narrow strip of rushing water. A plank had been placed across the torrent, and Hortense had safely reached the opposite side, when Madame de Broc, following her, made a false step, and fell into the eddying waters below. Every effort to save her was fruitless, and it was clear that death must have been rapid. The Queen, seated on the trunk of a tree, her head in her hands, refused to leave the spot until the body of her friend should have been recovered. Thus she waited for twenty minutes ; at length the stream was turned aside, and the unfortunate woman was withdrawn, dead, from the waters.¹

Hortense's grief was sincere and profound. She had loved Adèle de Broc, and was not quickly consoled ; and the shock of the accident must have gone far to neutralise any good effect from the waters of Aix. Throwing herself, in her sorrow, into charitable works, she became attached to the Sisters of Charity who had

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i. p. 85 seq.

kept vigil beside the dead, and made them a permanent foundation in Aix.

The rest of the summer, uneventful in France, was crowded with events upon the battlefield of Europe. One by one the nations who had remained friendly fell away from Napoleon. Prussia, England, Sweden, Russia, were banded together against him ; and Austria was passing over to the enemy. The Princes of the Confederation of the Rhine were amongst the deserters, and upon the battlefield of Leipsic the Saxons and the Würtembergers changed sides. By November 9 the Emperor had returned to Paris, defeated but not disheartened. Of peace, on the terms proposed by the allied Powers, he would have none ; on conditions he would have accepted it was not within his reach ; and he was making ready once more for the fight.

It was a time well calculated to sift true from false friends. If misfortune was alienating many attached by self-interest alone to the Empire, it had an opposite effect upon others. Louis Bonaparte had repaired to Paris and was once again at his mother's house ; desiring, according to some lookers-on, to take his place, in a season of disaster, at his great brother's side. Other accounts attribute his return to the necessity of quitting his retreat at Gratz caused by the action of the allies. Hortense preferred the former explanation. With emancipation from his control, she had arrived at a more generous estimate of Louis' character than had been possible to her in earlier days. " My husband is a good Frenchman," she said. " He

proves it by coming back to France at the moment when all Europe is declaring itself against her. . . . He is an honest man. . . . It is worthy of him to join with every Frenchman in doing what he can in the defence of his country. Thus should gratitude be shown for all that the people has done for our family.”¹ The Emperor possibly took a different view of his brother’s conduct. He was in no mood to appreciate Louis’ tardy devotion, and received him coldly. He perhaps remembered that, for the second time, in the previous August, at a moment when there can have been scanty leisure to attend to his demands, he had repeated his attempt to be reinstated on the throne of Holland.²

If Hortense approved of her husband’s behaviour, she was afforded juster grounds for pride by her brother. Eugène had been sent back to Italy in the summer, the Emperor conceiving that his presence there was more necessary than with the army. In November negotiations were set on foot by the allies with the young Viceroy ; the King of Bavaria, excusably anxious to secure the future of his daughter and to detach her husband from a failing cause, serving as intermediary. It was intimated to the Prince that, should he consent to abandon the Emperor, he might look for a crown as his reward. To a man of Eugène’s stainless honour and perfect loyalty, the offered bribe could hold small temptation. Nevertheless, contrasted

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i. p. 137.

² *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. iii. p. 176

with Murat's treason, the unfaltering devotion of the Viceroy to the man to whom both alike owed everything stands out; whilst the enthusiastic approval of his wife is still more noteworthy. Nothing, Princess Augusta wrote to her husband's mother, great or noble or good in Eugène could surprise her; she was nevertheless more proud and happy than before in being his wife, since he had refused a crown rather than play the ingrate and the coward, and betray the Emperor, as the King of Naples had done.¹

Hortense, it is needless to say, was of the same mind. "What does it matter what happens?" she said. "To do his duty worthily, as my brother has done, makes a man happier than to possess a crown."²

To ordinary critics Eugène's fidelity, given his high character, might seem a matter of course. To crowned heads, inclined to estimate their position at a different value from that accorded to it by mere spectators of the game of royalty, it may appear to merit the extravagant laudations it called forth—laudations referred to by Napoleon with contemptuous irony.

"It is *fâcheux* for our century," he wrote to his stepson, "that your reply to the King of Bavaria should have gained you the esteem of all Europe. As for me, I paid you no compliments upon the subject, because you only did your duty, and that is a simple thing."³

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. i. p. 150.

² *Ibid.* t. i. p. 151.

³ *Mémoires du Prince Eugène*, t. x. p. 137.

The Emperor's view of the refusal of a bribe did the Viceroy more honour than the adulation of his admirers. But Napoleon was to learn by bitter experience that to perform the duty of remaining faithful to a fallen master was not, as he esteemed it, "a simple thing," in the eyes of many upon whom he would have counted with no less assurance than upon Eugène.

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CHAPTER XVIII

1814

Imperial reverses—Paris in danger—Hortense's attitude—Her flight—
At Trianon, Rambouillet, and Navarre—Her schemes for the
future.

WITH the treachery of his brother-in law, Murat, and of his sister added to the tale of the Emperor's misfortunes, the year 1813 had closed. By the end of January he had taken a last farewell of his wife and of the son for whom he had so passionately longed. The allies had crossed the French frontier. It was no longer a question of carrying the war into the enemy's country, but of national defence.

On January 23, the eve of his departure to join the army, he presented Marie Louise and her child to the assembled officers of the National Guard and confided them to their care.

"I go to fight the enemy," he told them ; "I entrust to you what is dearest to me—the Empress, my wife, and the King of Rome, my son."

That night Hortense dined at the Tuileries. It was a melancholy evening, and she stayed late at the palace, endeavouring to cheer the Empress.

"She weeps as my mother wept when he was leaving her," she said afterwards. "And I think," she added, "that her show of affliction is sincere."

If the words indicated a suspicion of a doubt, it was shortly to be justified. Meantime, the Emperor gone, there was nothing to be done but to await developments. In the anxious city rumours were rife. It was reported that the Grand Duke Constantine had promised his troops that they should warm themselves at the ashes of Paris. It was probably known that Madame de Krüdener, Hortense's Baden acquaintance, whose fame as a prophetess was becoming widespread, was busily foretelling the destruction of the *ange noir*, Napoleon, at the hands of the Czar Alexander, the *ange blanc*. Women were concealing their jewels. Some were leaving the capital. Hidden in their chambers, Royalist ladies, with secret rejoicing, were preparing white cockades; whilst Marie Louise, Hortense, and their households were engaged in the manufacture of *charpie* for the use of the wounded, by whom the hospitals were being rapidly filled.¹

In the hôtel in the rue Cérutti, as in many houses in Paris, all other interests and occupations will have given way to the one absorbing thought of the struggle for life or death that was being fought out. The children were encouraged to participate in the anxiety of the hour. It was no part of Hortense's system of education to seek to shield her sons from premature

¹ *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. iii. p. 221.

comprehension of the sorrows and ills of life; and she had been at pains to bring home to their minds the calamities overtaking their native land, and the suffering and want and privation consequent upon the war. Were they older, she told the boys, they should have gone with the Emperor to take part in the defence of the country. As it was, would they not share what they had with the victims? The children responded with enthusiasm to the appeal, bringing toys, money, all they possessed, to be used for the purpose suggested. It was agreed that so long as the enemy was upon French soil they should forgo their dessert, and Prince Napoleon counted the sacrifice as a distinction, making his little brother understand that association in the public disaster was a thing to be proud of.¹

The campaign had opened with some successes on the part of the Imperial troops, and hopes in Paris had risen high. Negotiations between Napoleon and the allies had ensued, and it had at one time appeared possible that a satisfactory arrangement might be arrived at. But it was soon apparent that these hopes were doomed to disappointment, and in a letter to his secretary the Emperor told him that he would regard the first petition urging him to make peace as an act of rebellion.² Advice to that effect from his brother Louis he treated with angry contempt. "King Louis'

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, from which many of the details in this and the subsequent chapters dealing with this period are drawn.

² *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. iii. p. 223.

letter," he wrote to Joseph, "is nothing but a rhapsody. That man has always a false judgment and avoids the question at issue. . . . [To talk of peace] . . . is to give advice very ill *à propos*."

His letters were marked by the bitter impatience of a man whose every nerve is strained. "Cause these prayers and Misereres to cease," he ordered Joseph. "If so many *singeries* are carried on, we shall all be afraid of death." Louis, who was a saint, he added mockingly, might promise a lighted taper to the Madonna of armies.¹

In Paris it was considered of the last importance to maintain an appearance of security, and when a reduction was made in the expenses of Hortense's stables, Fouché went so far as to remonstrate. Reform in matters of the kind, he said, indicated fear. The Emperor would disapprove. The Queen was not inclined to indulge apprehension. So late as March 28, when it could no longer be denied that the capital was menaced, and news was circulated that the enemy was no farther than five leagues distant, she refused to draw disquieting conclusions from this fact. Her faith in the ruler of the destinies of France was unshaken. If the hostile forces had been permitted to approach the city, it was the result of manœuvres on the Emperor's part unknown to those in Paris. He was not the man to permit himself to be surprised. At the moment when he was least expected he would appear to deliver

¹ *Les Rois Frères des Napoléon*, p. 66.

his capital. What was all-important was not to give way to alarm.

That evening a Council of State was held, to which Joseph Bonaparte communicated the secret instructions sent him twelve days earlier by his brother. Should resistance become impossible, the Emperor's wife, the King of Rome, and the great Crown officers and ministers were to quit the city. "Do not leave my son," Napoleon ordered, "and remember that I would rather know him to be in the Seine than in the hands of the enemies of France."¹

A debate followed, and, in spite of opposition, it was decided that the Empress and the little King should seek safety in flight. At the Tuileries that morning Hortense had implored her sister-in-law to refuse her consent to any such policy; and, repairing to the palace at night to learn the decision of the council, she entreated that she would remain at her post, striving to convince her that the suggested step was a fatal one. Marie Louise listened and agreed, but expressed her determination to abide by the advice of the council; and Hortense returned to her house in angry despair.

"Would you believe it, they are leaving," she told those anxiously awaiting her return. "Thus they ruin, *à plaisir*, France and the Emperor." Only women, she said, had courage. She herself would suffer least from a loss of greatness; but she was indignant

¹ *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. iii. p. 227.

at the lack of energy displayed when the need for it was so great. Questioned by her cousin's husband, Lavallette, Hortense informed him of her personal intentions.

"As they leave us to decide for ourselves," she said, "I will not be taken prisoner upon the highway. I stay in Paris. I will share their fortunes, good or bad, with the Parisians." For her mother, lonely and sad and helpless at Malmaison, it was another matter, and she sent a messenger to urge her to start at once for Navarre. For her own part—"I wish I were the mother of the King of Rome," she said. "I should know how, by my energy, to inspire others with the like." It was no vain boast. The stress of necessity had brought out in a nature not without its element of creole indolence a vigour and a courage with which she would not have been credited. "Napoleon fallen," said some one, speaking of this time, "there was only one man left in the Bonaparte family, and that man was Hortense."¹

Exhausted with the agitation of the day, she retired to rest. She was not to be left undisturbed ; and her reluctant attendant was quickly forced to waken her to read a letter from her husband. It announced what she knew too well, that the decision of the council had been taken, and that the Empress was leaving Paris. The Queen replied that she was aware of it, and the messenger departed. An hour later she was again aroused. The King had sent to inquire into her

¹ *La Reine Hortense* (J. Turquan), p. 225.

intended movements, adding that it would be impossible that she should remain in Paris with her children ; that he disapproved of the course determined upon, but that it was necessary to submit. The nature of the Queen's answer to this second message does not appear. It may be inferred from the fact that for the third time the household was disturbed. Louis now wrote to convey his explicit orders. His wife must follow the Empress.

When morning broke Paris was in a turmoil. Marie Louise was to leave the Palace at eight o'clock. By seven she was ready ; but, surrounded by advisers tendering opposite counsels, some hastening her departure, others urging that she should remain in Paris, she was torn by doubt and hesitation, and, leaning her head on her hands, burst into tears. When she had at length resolved to abide by the decision taken on the previous night, her son, "seeming to divine what the future held for him," obstinately refused to quit his apartment, struggling in the arms of the equerry who was carrying him to the carriage, and clinging to the doors and to the balustrade of the staircase.

"I will not leave my house," he cried again and again. "I will not go. Since *papa* is absent, it is I who am master."

The little heir, like others, was to yield to necessity. Meantime his cousins, Napoleon and Louis, had been sent to their father, upon his demand, coupled with the promise that they should promptly



THE EMPRESS MARIE LOUISE.

From a picture by Prudhon. Photo by Neurdin Freres.

return to the rue Cérutti; and Hortense was still in ignorance of what would follow, when her plans were settled by an interview with the Comte Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angely, Colonel of the National Guards. As he told of the discouragement produced by the departure of the Empress and her son, she made up her mind.

"Unhappily," she answered, "I cannot replace them. But I have no doubt that the Emperor is executing manœuvres which will shortly bring him here. Paris must hold out, and if the National Guard will defend the capital, tell them that I pledge myself to remain in it with my children."

The boys had been sent home by their father, certain that, in accordance with his directions, his wife was preparing to follow the Empress. Nothing was farther from her mind. With inveterate confidence she persisted in her belief that the Emperor would come and would save the situation.

"I expected to see Paris surrounded," she said, when informed that the enemy were in sight. "What is essential is to prevent them from entering it."

It was becoming patent to those least willing to relinquish hope that this was precisely what could not be done. Towards nightfall she received a second visit from Regnault.

"I give you back your pledge, madame," he said mournfully. "However well disposed the Guard may be, it is impossible to save Paris."

According to his forecast, the capital would be in

the enemy's hands by the following day, and he urged the Queen to lose no time in leaving it. Yet when the Count had quitted her, she still hesitated, almost refusing even now to believe that Paris could be lost. It was a message from her husband that at length determined her upon flight. At the very moment he was setting forth on his own journey he had learnt that his wife had not left the doomed city, and sent to demand possession of his sons lest they should be seized by the enemy as hostages. Hortense had no choice but to yield.

"Put in my horses," she said, "and tell the King that I am leaving at once with my children."

The arrangements were hurriedly made, and by nine o'clock the Queen and the Princes were on the road to Glatigny, near Versailles, where the night was to be passed. Their destination reached, Hortense saw the children put to bed. Whilst they slept, the sound of cannon announced that Paris was attacked, and a move was considered expedient to Trianon, where General Préval, commanding the troops at Versailles, could be trusted to watch over the safety of the Emperor's nephews. To a distance from the scene of action Hortense could not make up her mind to remove till she had learnt the fate of the city she loved.

"I cannot go far," she repeated, "when I hear the cannon, perhaps at this moment killing some of my countrymen and my friends. Alas!" she added, tears in her eyes, "until now I had never listened to firing

except at a *fête*, or in honour of the success of our armies."

In the garden of the little Trianon she awaited the event. It was a fine night ; and each shot was distinctly audible as the fight proceeded. Presently all was silent. The cessation of the sound of battle brought a sense of relief. It was, the Queen said, possible to breathe again, since there was no longer the fear that Parisians were being slain.

On March 31 Marmont destroyed all remaining hope by his submission ; the capitulation of Paris had taken place, and the allies had entered it. It is said that the General responsible for the surrender sorely repented, too late, of his course of action ; Napoleon was severe in his condemnation. "*Jamais chose avec telle naïveté que cette capitulation,*" he said afterwards with contempt.¹ The news, reaching him when on his way to the relief of the capital, was a crushing blow. The *ange blanc* was accomplishing his mission.

Late on the evening preceding the capitulation Hortense had reached Rambouillet. Marie Louise had already left it, to proceed on her journey ; it was crowded with officers of State, the Minister of War himself having followed the Empress from Paris. Joseph and Jérôme Bonaparte were still there, though intending to start that night on their way to rejoin their sister-in-law. They were at dinner when Hortense and her tired children arrived, and received

¹ *Napoleon at Fontainebleau* (Sir Neil Campbell), p. 223.

her with tidings of all that had taken place in Paris. The sight of Versailles alone would have been sufficient to enlighten her as to what had been going forward in the city she had left so reluctantly. "As we watched motionless at our window," says the Duchesse de Reggio, "it was the Empire that we saw passing by—the Empire, with its pomp and its splendour, which was departing—ministers, all in their coaches—and-six, carrying with them portfolios, wives, children, jewels, livery—the entire Council of State, the archives, the Crown jewels. . . ."

Whatever tragedy may be proceeding, it is necessary to eat ; but, as Mademoiselle Cochelet acidly remarks, it had not occurred to those in possession at Rambouillet to offer any supper to the newcomers. No provisions had been brought by the travellers, and though the Queen—who, she observes, with some irritation, lived almost without food—was unconscious of the lack of them, her indifference was not shared by her attendants. For Hortense, indeed, there were other and more important subjects of preoccupation. Joseph and Jérôme¹ were at one in advising their sister-in-law to proceed on her journey, as the Cossacks might appear at any moment. They did not accompany the recommendation with the proffer of facilities for acting upon it. Hortense's horses required rest, no others were available, and the two Kings

¹ M. Turquan states that Louis Bonaparte formed one of the party at Rambouillet, and that there husband and wife met after a lapse of four years. I can discover no indication of his presence or of any such meeting.

showed no disposition to place seats in their carriages at the service of their brother's wife and sons. The children were asleep, and the Queen had no alternative but to spend the night in her present quarters. Her further movements were determined by an express from her husband, directing her to follow the rest of the fugitives to Blois. In the letter, couched in terms of command and enforced by the authority of the Empress, Hortense was quick to detect the menace of a renewal of marital interference, and she was at once roused to rebellion.

"I *was* going to Blois," she exclaimed, "but I will now join my mother at Navarre"; and she wrote to announce her intention, not only to Marie Louise and to her husband, but to the Emperor.

The journey, resumed on the following day, was an anxious one. The road was thick with those seeking safety in flight; here and there a Cossack, emerging from the surrounding woods, was an earnest of possible peril. On the other hand, a courier of Napoleon's encountered on the way announced that his master was marching on Paris. The news re-awakened all Hortense's regrets.

"I was then right," she cried, "to wish that it should be defended. I was certain that the Emperor would come to the help of his capital. And now what is to become of him and of our army?"

The travellers themselves were occasionally regarded with apprehension, and at one village on their route the curé came forth to meet them, bearing the Blessed

Sacrament, in the belief that the party, by this time reinforced by a cavalry escort, was the dreaded enemy. So the hours passed by. Arrived at their first resting-place, the Queen's spirits for a moment gave way. In comparative safety, a reaction from the excitement of the past days set in, and she was overwhelmed with a passion of sorrow and pity.

"I weep," she said, "for all the misfortunes I foresee. We are in tranquillity here, but what is going on in Paris? No doubt there is fighting there. The Emperor, at the head of his army, will desire to regain his capital, and the enemy is master of it. How is one not to foresee a horrible struggle of extermination? All the calm surrounding us hurts me more than the agitation I have left behind."

The next day Navarre was reached, and Hortense and her children were safe under the shelter of her mother's roof. The travellers were eagerly welcomed by Joséphine, but it was observed that, in the Empress's salon itself, feelings with regard to the Imperial reverses were mixed, and that those were not wanting who were looking forward with satisfaction to the reconstitution of the old society and a recurrence to the ancient order of things. As in Paris, Talleyrand, "high priest of the temple of treason," with Fouché, Bourrienne, and their friends, were industriously making their peace with the destroyers of the Empire, so at Navarre the servants of the Empress and the Queen were separating into opposite camps.

Uncertainty as to the actual condition of affairs had prevailed when Hortense reached her destination ; but one night, after the household had retired to rest, the arrival of a messenger, with news from Fontainebleau, put an end to all doubt. Hortense, worn out by what she had gone through, ill and suffering, was in bed, and Joséphine brought the bearer of ill tidings to her room. "I shall never forget," says Mademoiselle Cochelet, present on the occasion, "the exclamation made by the Empress when M. de Maussion said that the Emperor would go to Elba.

"'Ah ! Hortense,' she cried, leaning towards her daughter, 'he is unhappy. What ! he is to be confined to the island of Elba ? Ah ! were it not for his wife, I would go and shut myself up with him there.' "

Hortense had her own future and that of her children to consider ; and, forming a project with characteristic rapidity, she communicated it to her attendant as soon as her mother had left her. She occupied, she said, an isolated position, and with the return of the Bourbons those who bore the Bonaparte name must quit France. Under these circumstances, she would sell her diamonds, go to Martinique, and live there upon their proceeds. It was settled that Mademoiselle Cochelet should return to Paris for the purpose of making the necessary arrangements, and should then accompany her to her retreat.

Though the plan was not destined to be carried into effect, the swiftness with which it was made, the

completeness of the breach contemplated not only with the associations of former years but with Europe itself, all tell the story of the woman to whom, in spite of other strong affections and keen interests, her children were alone an essential part of life. Twenty years later she was no less ready to follow her son to America.

CHAPTER XIX

1814

Mademoiselle Cochelet in Paris—The Emperor Alexander—Hortense's letters—She arrives at Malmaison—Eugène at the Tuileries—Royalists and Bonapartists—Napoleon at Fontainebleau—The Czar and the Beauharnais—Hortense the fashion—Joséphine's death—Hortense becomes Duchesse de Saint-Leu.

TO adherents of the Empire the capital presented a melancholy spectacle when Hortense's representative reached it. The return of the Bourbons had been agreed upon. Paris—the Paris of the people—submitted in silence; the Royalists, from whom Alexander had received an ovation as he entered the city, rejoiced, but not without uneasiness. Their day was not yet come, nor their triumph altogether assured.

On her arrival Mademoiselle Cochelet had been troubled with many misgivings as to her mistress's position. The Queen had no debts; but neither, under present circumstances, did she possess any certain income save what the sale of her jewels might bring. Money had ever been the least of her cares and anxieties, and though she believed that her diamonds would realise a sufficient sum to supply her wants and those of her children, Mademoiselle

Cochelet was less convinced of it. It was soon, however, to appear that the Beauharnais had a powerful advocate, and that the sympathies of the young Czar, Alexander, were enlisted, with singular fervour, upon their side. Although it was not till the following year that his first interview took place with Madame de Krüdener, by whose influence he was to be for a time so strangely dominated, the prophetess had already achieved a position and reputation fascinating to an imaginative nature, and the knowledge of her admiration for Hortense may have supplemented the interest inspired in the conqueror by the misfortunes of the fallen Queen. To whatever cause his partisanship was due, Mademoiselle Cochelet had scarcely reached Paris before it was made known to her that her mistress's fortunes would be zealously cared for by the man most capable of dictating terms to the Bourbons. Visiting her on his behalf, his representative, Nesselrode, deprecated the idea of the Queen's leaving France, and directed the *lectrice* to urge her immediate return to Paris; adding that the arrangement of her future would lie in her own hands, and that all her wishes would be carried out. Mademoiselle Cochelet rejoiced greatly. Everything appeared to promise a settlement beyond what could have been hoped; and her disappointment was proportionately bitter when, in answer to her assurances of the goodwill of the Czar and of his intention of supporting the Queen's claims, her mistress replied by an absolute refusal to separate her cause from that of the

Bonapartes. If Hortense modified her conception of her duty at a later date, there is no reason to question that her present attitude was sincere ; and one of her letters, written at this juncture, is worth quoting as giving a key to it.

“ All the world, like you,” she wrote to her *lectrice*, “ writes to ask me, What do you wish ? what do you ask for ? To all I reply, *Nothing at all*. What can I desire ? Is not my fate fixed ? . . . I beg of you, take no action that I might disapprove. I know that you love me, and that might mislead you ; but truly, I am not personally too much to be pitied. I have suffered so much in the midst of greatness ; I may perhaps be about to know tranquillity, and to find it preferable to all the restless brilliance that surrounded me. . . . My brother will be happy ; my mother will retain the enjoyment of her country and her possessions. As for me, I shall go to a distance with my children ; and life and fortune being assured to those I love, I can always bear misfortune affecting only my manner of living and not my heart. I am still troubled as to the fate awaiting the Emperor Napoleon and his family. . . . Had I not come to be near my mother, I am sure that I could not have left them in these unhappy times. Ah ! I hope that my children will not again be demanded from me—it is then that my courage would fail. . . . They are well—that is happiness for me. Thank M. de Nesselrode for all his interest. I assure you that there are positions called with reason unfortunate which are not without

their charm. They are those that put it in our power to judge of the sincerity of the sentiments we inspire."

If there was a suspicion of theatrical effect both in the attitude assumed and in its expression, it does not follow that, in taking it up, Hortense was not acting upon a genuine impulse forbidding her to separate her destiny from that of the race whose name she bore and to which her children belonged, or to accept private compensations in the midst of the universal cataclysm. She was no doubt aware that she enjoyed a special and personal popularity. Talleyrand—from whom praise came near to assuming the character of an insult—declared in council that he pleaded for Queen Hortense alone, since she was the single member of the Bonaparte family he respected ; and the Duc Dalberg, a member of the Provisional Government, told her connection, Madame Tascher, that the Queen was regarded as distinct from the family to which she belonged by marriage, and was both esteemed and loved. Eulogies of this nature, taken by themselves, might be felt to be a slur upon a woman bound by every tie of affection and gratitude to the fallen Emperor ; and it is the more necessary to remember that not only did she show no disposition to make capital out of his enemies' approval, but that she was resolute in proclaiming and advertising the identity of her interests with those of a family she had little reason to love and in showing her readiness to share in their calamities. It was well known that Alexander had small love for the Bourbons, and had

the arrangement of French affairs rested with him alone, a Regency might not have been out of the question. The Queen, however, testified no inclination to respond to his advances ; and to Nesselrode's exertions upon her behalf and the reiteration of his master's proffers of assistance, her sole rejoinder was the request that a letter she sent might be forwarded to her stepfather.

It was scarcely surprising that her emissary should have been disappointed at this result of her indefatigable labours. "It is strange," she wrote to the Queen, "that all my requests to be permitted to serve you should have merely ended in commissioning M. de Nesselrode to send a letter to the Emperor Napoleon at Fontainebleau. He believed at first that it was the one to his Emperor that he had asked for."

Notwithstanding the scanty encouragement received by her friendly enemies, their efforts to serve the Queen were not abandoned. In the treaty concluded between Napoleon and the allies, their present titles had been preserved to his family, with permission to live in France ; but though Hortense and her sons had been included in the arrangement, it was considered expedient by her Russian advocates, who had manifestly little confidence in Bourbon pledges, that her future should be secured by a separate and independent guarantee. For this purpose her presence appears to have been considered essential, and she was again urged to come to Malmaison. Letter after letter from Mademoiselle Cochelet placed her duty to her children,

the wishes of her friends and of her Russian advocates before her. When Hortense replied it was still to decline to act upon the advice given her.

"My mother will go to Malmaison," she said, "but I remain. My reasons are only too good. I ought not to separate my cause from that of my children. It is they, it is their family, who are sacrificed in all that is done. I will not enter into relations with those who destroy their destiny. The better I know how to bear calmly the blows of fortune which are changing my existence—to give to it, it may be, greater tranquillity—the less I should display this personal feeling. I ought to be much grieved by this our great adversity, and I desire to appear to be so, without entering into relations with those who would see in me a suppliant, when I have nothing to ask of them. I do not doubt that the Emperor of Russia is well disposed towards me. I have heard much good of him, even from the Emperor Napoleon. But, if I was curious in other days to know him, I do not wish to see him at this moment. Is he not our conqueror? . . . My children are well; my mother opposes all my projects—she says she has need of me. But nevertheless I shall go to join her who must be still more unhappy."

Acting upon the resolution thus announced Hortense started for Rambouillet, whither Marie Louise and her little son had returned. Her friends were in despair. In a letter sent to meet her at a half-way stage Mademoiselle Cochelet implored her to reconsider her decision. To carry it out would be, she

said, echoing the opinion of others, to ruin her future and that of her children. "Instead of returning with the Empress Joséphine, you are going to join a family who have never loved you, with whom you have had nothing but unhappiness, believing you are accomplishing a duty for which no one will be grateful to you. You will regret your action, and it will be too late. I implore you, do not go to Rambouillet."

M. de Marmold, attached to the Queen's household, was the bearer of Mademoiselle Cochelet's entreaties, supplemented by a note from Prince Leopold ; and was charged with the duty of using what influence he possessed to turn his mistress from her purpose. His efforts were vain.

"You may be right," Hortense admitted gently—she was still the *douce entêtée* that her brother had been wont to call her—"all may be true. I shall nevertheless go to see the Empress Marie Louise. . . . Nothing will alter my determination."

What her friends failed to do, circumstances effected. Joséphine, less obstinate than her daughter, had consented to return to Malmaison ; and thither Alexander lost no time in hastening, that he might pay his respects to the Emperor's discarded wife. Before his visit was concluded, general astonishment was caused by the wholly unexpected appearance of Hortense and her children. Mademoiselle Cochelet's prediction had been promptly verified, and embarrassment, rather than gratitude, had been plainly visible in the reception accorded her by Marie Louise. The Emperor

of Austria was expected to visit his daughter at Rambouillet, where the presence of the Queen, identified as she was with the Bonaparte family, would be inconvenient and inopportune. Quick to perceive her sister-in-law's dilemma, Hortense had relieved her without delay of an unwelcome guest.

"Since I was an embarrassment, rather than a consolation, to the Empress Marie Louise, I left her," she explained, rightly feeling that, in this case, her place was with her mother. The rebuff had not rendered her the more disposed to turn to her profit the goodwill of the Czar ; and at this first meeting with the woman so well known to him by repute he was disappointed in her, the response she made to his tenders of support being so cold that it was felt that she was rendering it difficult for him to continue to perform the office of a friend. Joséphine, according to Nesselrode, had charmed his master by her gentleness and kindness ; the impression produced by her daughter had been of a different nature. The Queen, however, was impenitent.

"I received him as I ought to receive the conquerors of my country," she persisted, when apprised of the complaint. She knew, she added, that he had been a generous enemy to Napoleon, and she would show that such was her opinion. But at the first moment his position towards the country had been alone in her thoughts.

As time went on the relationship improved. Alexander was constantly at Malmaison, and the contrast of the

attention he was sedulous in paying to the dispossessed Empress and her daughter, and his unveiled contempt for the restored Bourbons, cannot have failed to commend him to the Beauharnais. When Eugène joined his mother and sister he was at once included in the friendly cordiality shown by the Czar. It is probable that the ex-Viceroy was more appreciative of it than his sister. Notwithstanding his affection for his stepfather, neither he nor his children bore the Bonaparte name, and he may have fairly considered himself less bound up with those who did so than Hortense. But if he is to be excused for not having compromised his future by maintaining, once in Paris, a hostile attitude towards those who replaced the Emperor at the Tuileries, he would have done better to remain for the present at a distance ; and it is a shock to find that the Prince had lost no time in paying his respects to the new ruler. "I had scarcely kissed my mother," he wrote to his wife, "before I received the authorisation to present myself at the Tuileries. I have therefore offered my homage to Louis XVIII., who received me perfectly, and asked after you with much interest." ¹

He did not include in his letter a description of the scene that had taken place at the Palace. Hearing his guest announced as the Marquis de Beauharnais, the King rose, and, advancing to meet him, held out his hand, bidding the official to use the title His Highness the Prince Eugène Napoléon, "and to add—if

¹ *Mémoires du Prince Eugène*, t. x. p. 288.

such should be the Prince's good pleasure—Grand Constable of France.”¹

The incident was painful, no less in the reparation offered by the King to the adopted son of the Emperor, than in the studied insult of the subordinate ; and it is strange to find that, though Eugène declined the proffered post, a naïve satisfaction in the attentions shown him is noticeable in the letter to his wife, written four days later, when he had paid his visits of ceremony to the Emperors, Kings, and Princes then occupying as conquerors the French capital.

“I cannot say enough of their graciousness in receiving me,” wrote Napoleon's stepson. “They promise, when my future is in question, to take an interest in it.”²

The tone assumed by a man of Eugène's stainless reputation and honour is as deplorable as it is difficult to understand. A candour and simplicity curiously often included in the eulogies of his contemporaries was, however, combined with his courage and loyalty. These qualities may be responsible, if not for the desire to assure his fortunes and those of his wife and children by the conciliation of the men in whose hands it would lie to make or mar them, at least for the openness with which he avowed what a cleverer or more complex character would have seen the wisdom of concealing. Had the Emperor been in a position to prolong the struggle, there is no reason to believe that Eugène would have

¹ *Mémoires du Prince Eugène*, t. x.

² *Ibid.* t. x. p. 289.

been otherwise than faithful. But the game being lost, he considered himself at liberty to make terms with the enemy. That he did so must be matter of regret. Talking afterwards to Madame du Cayla, he frankly expressed his astonishment that Frenchwomen could so far have forgotten themselves as to welcome and *fête* a foreign army, covered with French blood. He would have done well to have set the example of dignity and restraint to those guilty of the outrage he condemned, by holding altogether aloof from a party prevented by policy alone from testifying their contemptuous dislike for all who owed their rank and position to the Empire.

“Is not that the Prince who married one of Bonaparte’s princesses?” asked the Duchesse d’Angoulême, indicating Stéphanie’s husband, the Grand Duke of Baden. “What weakness to have allied himself with them!”

The Duchess had ill chosen the person to whom the observation was addressed. It was the Prince of Bavaria, brother-in-law to Eugène; and the Emperor of Austria was not far off. In blundering fashion, she had merely given expression to what others were feeling. It was the habit and policy of the restored Royalists to ignore the Empire and all that had belonged to it. The King, affixing his signature to his first Acts, dated them the nineteenth year of his reign; and when Alexander finally succeeded in forcing from the French authorities Hortense’s recognition as Duchesse de Saint-Leu, with possession of a portion of her property there,

the patent bestowing the title upon her stated that it was bestowed upon Mademoiselle de Beauharnais—a favour having been by this means ingeniously converted into an insult. The Czar was too powerful to be resisted; but the preference he openly showed for the Beauharnais and their mother had served to embitter royalist sentiment against them.

Hortense, of higher spirit than her brother, indignantly resented the terms in which the deed was couched. She had, she said, received her former title without having desired it; it had not rendered her happy, and she lost it without regret. But she would make no concession to the party of the conquerors, nor allow it to be forgotten that she had been a Queen. Proceeding to say for Eugène what he had not said for himself, she observed that her brother had, wrongly, considered it beneath him to give the lie to the statement made in the newspapers to the effect that he had caused himself to be announced at Court as the Marquis de Beauharnais. The men who had invented the falsehood wished to persuade the nations that their former rulers recognised that the rights conferred upon them were not valid, and laid them at the feet of the Bourbons. Their dignity was too much bound up with that of France to be compromised thus.

Whilst Paris was pervaded by this atmosphere and torn by conflicting parties whose reconciliation was merely superficial, it was not unnatural that Napoleon at Fontainebleau, lonely, sore at heart, defeated, and confronted by the dreary prospect of Elba,

should have viewed with disfavour the well-meant attentions of the victor to his family.

"What does he expect to get from that?" he asked, informed of the Czar's visit to Malmaison. When it further transpired that Alexander had paid his respects to Marie Louise, he regarded what was doubtless intended as an act of courtesy in quite another light. It was, he said, an insult to women in sorrow to appear before them in the guise of a conqueror. "C'est du Grec," he added.¹

The King of Rome endorsed his father's opinion, and the Czar and the King of Prussia asking in turn to see him, "the interesting child was somewhat *ennuyé* at their visits, perceiving, in spite of his tender age, that they were not due to any feeling of interest, and that he was nothing but the object of indiscreet curiosity."²

If Alexander's advances were inevitably viewed with distaste by his fallen rival, his considerate kindness, supplemented by the open expression of his dislike for the present sovereign, could not fail to win recognition from the Beauharnais.

"I do not know whether I shall not one day repent having put the Bourbons upon the throne," he observed to Eugène before leaving France. "Believe me, my dear Eugène, they are no good. We have had them in Russia, and I know what to think of them."³

¹ *Napoleon at Fontainebleau* (Sir Neil Campbell), p. 172.

² *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. iii. p. 302.

³ *Mémoires de Lavallette*, t. ii. p. 102.

With regard to the Prince's fortunes, he desired that the care of them should be left in his hands—he took everything upon himself, and “had the *amour-propre* to believe that Eugène would be content with him.”¹ His position at Malmaison was becoming rather that of an old friend than of a foreign sovereign.

“Are the Kings not our uncles?” asked little Louis once, after a visit from the Czar and the King of Prussia. In his limited experience the terms were synonymous. Hearing that the guests were, on the contrary, conquerors, the elder boy protested.

“Why, then, do they kiss us?” he questioned, “since they are the enemies of my uncle, the Emperor?”

Again an explanation was supplied. The Czar, the child was told, if an enemy, was a generous one, to whom it was due that their position, their mother's, and their uncles', was not much worse. Louis, listening in silence, meditated on the matter, and when he next saw Alexander he slipped a ring, given him by Eugène, into his hand, “*puisqu'il est bon pour maman.*”

In befriending Hortense the Czar still found difficulties. In spite of gratitude, in spite of her appreciation of his affection for her family and his zeal on their behalf, in spite of a genuine liking on her part, there lingered in her mind some trace of the old hostility inspired by a man who wore the guise of a victor; and when, as a special grace, he had asked and obtained from Joséphine the autograph copy of her daughter's songs, the Queen expressed her regret

¹ *Mémoires du Prince Eugène*, t. x. p. 292.



From an engraving after Wolkoff.

ALEXANDER I., EMPEROR OF RUSSIA.

that it should have passed into his possession. Nor would she consent to second his efforts to surmount the obstacles placed by Louis XVIII. and his advisers in the way of obtaining for her from the government a fitting and adequate financial provision. It was not without reason that Alexander suspected that unless the allies were definitely pledged to some such arrangement, Hortense and her children might be left unprovided for, and her indifference in the matter was viewed by him with surprise and curiosity. "I am persuaded," he told Mademoiselle Cochelet, "that she thinks one can live without money, and upon air. . . . I never saw so interesting a woman. Were she my sister, I could not be more anxious to serve her. But she is very obstinate, your Queen !"

The consciousness of a partial responsibility for the change in her condition was painful to him, and visiting Saint-Leu, where she had formerly been exercising her skill in landscape gardening in a portion of the estate now made over to the Prince de Condé, his depression was manifest.

Paris, meanwhile, had taken its cue from Alexander, and in the same way that, following his example and that of the King of Prussia, the world had found its way to Malmaison, so it now echoed his praises of the Queen. They were repeated to her, and she smiled.

"They say it because it is at the moment the *mode*," she replied. "What do they know about it? I say so little to them !"

in his hands.¹ On quitting Paris, he brought the letters patent to Malmaison, feeling with sadness that they came, in a sense, too late.

"In this terrible moment they have no interest for the Queen," he said, reading her rightly, as he consigned the papers to Mademoiselle Cochelet's care, "and I do not venture to present them to her in person. Give them to her when she is better. . . . I have been compelled to seize, in some sort, on this act of justice and reparation. The Queen owes no gratitude to any one for it, and I entreat her to render no thanks."

That same night Alexander started for England. On his return to Paris, it was in a different character. His departure closed the short chapter of the friendship between him and the woman he had been so zealous in befriending.

¹ *Mémoires de Lavallette*, t. ii. p. 103.

CHAPTER XX

1814—1815

Hortense in adversity—Pozzo di Borgo at Saint-Leu—Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier—Meeting at Baden with Eugène, and Madame de Krüdener—Life at Saint-Leu—Accused of intrigue—Louis claims his son—Hortense's position in Paris—Visit to the Tuileries—Interview with Wellington—Unrest in the capital.

THE great crises of life come and pass. Such a crisis had been to Hortense the fall of Napoleon, carrying with it all connected with him, and followed by the crushing blow of her mother's death. It is at these times that character is shown. To adapt oneself to a totally new set of circumstances is not easy, nor is it a simple thing to take the lower place with grace and composure. The advantages attached to rank and power are apt to assume disproportionate value when they have been forfeited, and to accept their loss with dignity is to prove that, possessed, they had not been rated above their true worth.

Hortense was to supply this testimony to the genuineness of the indifference she had professed in these matters. Yet it must have been upon a new world, a reconstituted present and future, that she gazed as she gradually emerged from her sorrow and entered again upon common life. Familiar landmarks were swept

away, and her habits, her outlook, her aspirations for her children, had to be readjusted on a fresh basis. That she proved equal to the occasion goes far to corroborate the judgment formed of her by many of her contemporaries. Perhaps a little self-consciously, and not without some recognition of the fact that she was performing her part well and worthily, she acted in a fashion to command respect, and to awaken, in those who loved her, enthusiasm. If the knowledge that she was conforming herself to the ideal standard ever commanding her allegiance caused her satisfaction, there is no need to grudge it to her. It should, moreover, be borne in mind that, should a tendency be detected, if not in her conduct, in her language, to play to an audience, she laboured under the disadvantage, for the three years 1813, 1814, and 1815, of feeling that a reporter was always at hand to take down her utterances. Few women—perhaps few men—would be altogether uninfluenced by the knowledge that their words were in a sense stereotyped as they were spoken, or would rise superior to the temptation to adapt them to the public ear. Mademoiselle Cochelet's memoirs depict one side of her mistress's character, nor is there any reason to suspect that it was not a true one ; but it is undoubtedly the side Hortense would have wished to present to the world.

The fresh grief of a parting with Eugène followed quickly upon her mother's death. In sorrow, as in prosperity, she clung to him, and the more as her position became one of greater loneliness.

"I am frightened at his departure," she said. "My isolation frightens me."

Eugène in some sort shared both her apprehensions and the doubts she indulged as to whether she had done wisely in listening to those who would have had her remain in France. The distrust shown by the Bourbons had been—in spite of superficial courtesy—sufficiently marked to lead him to hasten his own journey. It was his wish that, so soon as he possessed a settled home, his sister should share it; and in taking leave of her, he held out hopes that he and his wife would shortly join her at Aix, whither she was going by the advice of her physicians.

In the meantime, the indiscretions of her friends were not likely to allay the mistrust of the government or to enlist or retain on her side the support of the allied powers. The violent hostility of Pozzo di Borgo, Russian Ambassador at Paris, to everything connected with the Empire was so well recognised that his master had arranged that the affairs of the Queen should be conducted by a subordinate, M. Boutiakim, through whose hands Alexander's correspondence with her was to go. The Ambassador had, however, paid a formal visit to Saint-Leu, and had received in consequence an invitation to dinner. On this occasion an incident occurred tending to confirm any suspicions he might have entertained as to the society accustomed to frequent Hortense's salon.

Certain young Napoleonist officers, Colonel Lawoestine at their head, had been busily engaged in

turning the Royalists into ridicule. Assuming the costumes of the last century, and decorated with immense white cockades, they had caricatured the *émigrés*, indignantly declining to partake of chicken *à la Marengo* offered to them at a restaurant, on the grounds that the name recalled the *régime* of an usurper. The culprits had carried the joke so far as to pursue it under the very windows of the Tuileries, the affair resulting in a fortnight's confinement to barracks of the four offenders.

On the afternoon of the day when Pozzo di Borgo was expected at Saint-Leu, the ringleader in the farce, Colonel Lawoestine, had also unfortunately repaired thither, making his excuses for not having sooner paid his respects to the Queen by a description of his escapade, and receiving in return a rebuke not unmingled with amusement. The performance, Hortense told him, might have been a fitting one for pages, but not for Colonels. Misfortune should have made him and his comrades older.

Labédoyère, the young soldier who, a year later, was to die upon the scaffold, was present, and laughed. The Queen, he said gaily, was scolding again. He was glad he was not the only person to incur her blame; and Hortense, her reprimand delivered, had retired to dress for dinner, leaving her visitors in possession of the salon, when, unfortunately early, the Russian Ambassador, with his subordinate Boutiakim, appeared upon the scene.

The sight of a man of notoriously anti-Imperial

sympathies was too much for the hot-headed Lawoestine. Rendered perhaps still less inclined to be conciliatory by recent events and his fortnight's enforced retreat, he proceeded, deliberately ignoring the Ambassador, to keep up a conversation ill calculated to raise the political character of the Queen's salon in the opinion of her guest, animadverting in especial upon the Allies and those Frenchmen who had not been ashamed to return to France under their wing. The Russian, taking the more dignified part of appearing unconscious of language not ostensibly addressed to himself, nevertheless formed his conclusions and drew his inferences from what he heard. If this was the company to be met at the house of the Duchesse de Saint-Leu, he observed to Boutiakim, he had no place there. A dangerous enemy was strengthened in his prejudices.

Amongst other guests at Saint-Leu during this summer were Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier. Grateful for kindness shown them by the Queen in her more prosperous days, they now sought permission to visit her, and were made welcome. Some trepidation had been caused by the reputation they enjoyed ; but all would have gone well had it not been for the ignorance unfortunately betrayed by Hortense of the *chef d'œuvre* of her formidable guest. Had Madame de Staël, she asked absently, ever been in Italy ?

" *Et Corinne ? et Corinne ?* " cried some of the bystanders. " Your Majesty has not read *Corinne* ? "

The Queen was visibly embarrassed.

"Yes—no," she replied ; " I shall read it again." She did not add that the book had been read aloud to her when, after the death of her little son, she had been in no condition to appreciate its literary excellence, or even to remember the subject of it. "She would not have understood," she said indifferently, asked afterwards why she had offered no explanation soothing to her visitor's vanity. "I am lost in her estimation, . . . but it was not the moment to talk of myself."

She may have guessed there were subjects of greater interest to the guest. Madame de Staël was eager to discuss the Emperor, the prejudice he had always entertained against her, her own admiration, and her desire to follow him to Elba. Would she be received, she questioned anxiously, did she take the step ? Hortense replied with perfunctory civility that Napoleon would doubtless receive a like disciple "*à merveille*"; and so the conversation proceeded, until the literary lady directed her attention to the children, in the apparent hope of extracting further details concerning their uncle. Though replying politely, Prince Napoleon appears to have viewed the visitor with disfavour.

"*Cette dame est bien questionneuse*," he observed, her catechism concluded. "Is that what is called being clever ?"

It is not necessary to linger over the remainder of the summer, spent partly at Plombières, partly at Baden, where a brilliant company had assembled.



From a picture by Mlle. M. E. de Godefroy. Photo by Neurdin Frères.

MADAME DE STAEL.

The Grand Duchess Stéphanie was there, eager to welcome her cousin, with the Empress of Russia and the King of Bavaria. But it was the presence of Eugène which had attracted his sister to the place.

"I feel alive again in seeing my brother," she said as, with tears in her eyes, she prepared to greet him.

Amongst other visitors to Baden was Madame de Krüdener, met by Hortense for the first time for four years. In her character of seer and prophetess, she thoroughly alarmed her friend, Mademoiselle Cochelet, by the solemnity of her predictions of misfortune to France and to Hortense.

"I am come to see your Queen," she said, appearing before the *lectrice*, a spare, lean, little figure, with fair, disordered hair, gleaming eyes, and a mien and gesture of authority. "I must save her from the danger by which she is menaced. . . . She must undergo her destiny. She is beloved of God. . . . Let her resign herself; she is not at the end of all her afflictions."

So pure, so sublime a soul, she admitted, should indeed be happy. She was to expect nothing from men. Above all—descending to more practical matters—she was, instead of returning to France, to repair to Russia, where Alexander would afford her shelter. The year 1815 was to be one of terror. Napoleon was to quit his island, and to rise to greater heights than before. But those who became his allies would be hunted, persecuted, and punished.

Mademoiselle Cochelet, hearing this and more, was terror-stricken. Her mistress, when the scene was duly reported to her, was less impressed. Her sentiments towards the seer had undergone a change since their former meeting at Baden. Madame de Krüdener, she observed, was an excellent person, whom she much liked. To believe her to be a prophetess was a different matter. She consented, nevertheless, to grant her an interview, and appears to have retained a genuine esteem for a woman at whose predictions she smiled, and whom she characterised as *exaltée* and probably ill. As to her admonitions and advice, if indeed the Emperor should return to France, Hortense was his daughter, and whatever misfortunes might ensue, her place was at his side.

A visit paid by the visionary to Eugène and his wife had a more exhilarating effect. The Prince took her for a lunatic, and the Princess Augusta was so manifestly thunderstruck and bewildered by the harangue she delivered that Hortense, witness of the scene, fled from the room overcome by laughter.

By the end of August the Queen had left Baden, to return to Saint-Leu. The journey was marked by the inconvenient determination manifested by some officers encountered on the way to do honour to a Queen identified with the cause of the fallen Emperor ; nor was it without some difficulty that she succeeded in convincing them that she preferred to dispense with their escort, as well as with their loud and compromising demonstrations of loyalty.

From Saint-Leu the Queen proceeded to Havre, and it was not until September that she was once more settled at home. She was a person suspect, her movements were carefully watched, and a report of the Sûreté Générale of September 8 recorded that on the 3rd Madame Louis Bonaparte had arrived in Paris, with a numerous suite of people and carriages. Her cortège, it was added, "made the neighbours talk."¹

Once at Saint-Leu, she seems to have done little to invite attention. Her usual habits were resumed, only interrupted by visits from guests who cared sufficiently to see her to make the expedition from Paris. Amongst these Labédoyère was conspicuous, whilst the artist Garnerey gave a weekly lesson in drawing, and Madame Campan came to lament the closing of the educational establishment over which she had been placed by the Emperor at Écouen, the château having been reclaimed by the Prince de Condé and the scholars dispersed. If Hortense, as her enemies assert, was occupied in political intrigues, no proof of the fact is forthcoming; and the evidence afforded by the presence in her salon of those who had been attached to the Empire and openly regretted the restoration is inconclusive. Where, if not amongst these men, should the Emperor's stepdaughter have sought her friends and associates? To others she was a relic of a state of things of which they resented the very recollection. To Labédoyère and his comrades she was a sacred legacy from a past they cherished amongst

¹ *Les secrets des Bonaparte* (Ch. Nauroy), p. 157.

their dearest memories, a woman and a queen to whom their allegiance was vowed. They made no secret of their devotion. At a salon she had visited on her return to Paris, the Duchesse de Gontaut was bewildered by the conversation she overheard. "They were delighted to learn that the Queen was well. A certain young and handsome M. de Lawoestine had just come from her, and they all crowded round him. . . . I racked my brain to think of what sovereign this Queen could be the wife, and I asked the question in a low voice of Madame de Valence, who replied aloud, 'Why, it is Queen Hortense.'"¹ Had the efforts of the Emperor's stepdaughter been ceaselessly directed, as was currently reported, towards a counter-revolution, it is difficult to see that she would have been greatly to blame; but except on the assumption that, even with her intimate associates, she was consistently playing a double part, this was far from being the case. She had accepted the change in her fortunes, and found it not devoid of compensations. Her mode of life, she told her confidants, suited her. "I reproach myself with being happier than when fortune heaped favours upon France and upon my family. I only ask of God to remain in my present condition."

If she counted upon the continuance of her tranquillity, she had forgotten to reckon with her husband. An intimation had reached her that, now that his brother was no longer in a position to afford her protection, Louis Bonaparte would not be content to

¹ *Mémoires de la Duchesse de Gontaut*, t. i.

leave her in undisputed possession of her children. Writing to reiterate his desire to sever all ties between himself and his wife, he had suggested that she should relinquish to him the elder of the boys. What answer Hortense returned to his letter does not appear. That she would comply without a struggle can scarcely have been anticipated ; and nothing further having, for the moment, ensued, she may have deluded herself with the hope that the matter would be allowed to rest. She was to be undeceived. On a certain autumn morning, after her return to Saint-Leu, an emissary from her husband appeared, charged with the duty of enforcing his paternal rights.

At this time it would seem that both of the children were included in his demand. It was subsequently limited to the elder of the two ; nor, setting sentiment on one side, will it be denied that in claiming one, at least, of his sons, Louis was not unjustified. Neither one nor both, however, would their mother yield, unless compelled thereto by forcible means ; and though Eugène and the Emperor Alexander were agreed in counselling submission, she adhered to her determination to leave Louis to resort to legal measures. A report of the *Sûreté Générale*, dated November 29, gave the official version of the affair. "It is asserted," it ran, "that Louis Bonaparte is about to present a legal demand to obtain his two sons, over seven years of age.¹ It is at this age that male children come

¹ Born in March, 1808, the younger child was only six, which may account for his father's consent to leave him with his mother.

under the power of their father. By reason of this action Bonaparte's wife has addressed the Chancellor and has asked for an interview. The Chancellor, in consequence, gave an audience to Madame Hortense, who seemed shocked [*formalisée*] that he had not called upon her, and had paid no attention to the title she formerly bore. Nevertheless, the *ci-devant* Queen went to the Chancellor, to whom she communicated the subject of her anxiety. The Chancellor replied that he could take no part in the suit, and that the affair belonged to the courts of law."¹

The language of this report gives a key to the light in which Louis Bonaparte's wife was regarded in official quarters. Aware both of the prejudice felt against her and of the fact that she was surrounded by police agents whose business it was to keep the authorities informed as to her movements and habits, she decided upon a step to be regretted by all who occupy in any sort the position of her apologists. This was her visit to the Tuileries. Viewed as a measure she may have considered necessary to enlist the sympathy of those in power on behalf of her children, her action may be pardoned, but it cannot be commended. As a sign of gratitude for benefits received—the character in which she preferred to represent it—or as a protest against the rumours in circulation with regard to her propensities to political intrigue, it admits of no palliation. Her endeavours to justify the intention of seeking an audience with Louis XVIII. were, to judge by the

¹ *Les secrets des Bonaparte* (Ch. Nauroy), p. 158.

specimen supplied by Mademoiselle Cochelet, a little grandiloquent. Her attendance at the Tuileries was a duty, she explained ; and when this was the case, she performed the required action without considering the consequences. She proceeded to carry out her present resolve without delay.

So far as the King was concerned, the visit was an entire success. His guest was received by Louis in his private cabinet, and no witnesses assisted at the interview. On her reappearance she was surrounded by the courtiers who had waited outside, anxious to learn the result of the meeting. "Well, madame," asked the Duc de Grammont, "are you pleased with our King?"

"Extremely so," was the Queen's reply—she could indeed have said no less—and she took her departure.

Describing the audience to her companion, she said that Louis had been most courteous, even *galant*. He had, on her entrance, betrayed some embarrassment, and she had been the first to speak—a matter of little difficulty, she observed, when it was merely a question of returning thanks for his conduct towards her. He gave her the impression of being a good man. She had been more at her ease with him than with the Emperor Napoleon. "It is not surprising," she observed. "Personal greatness imposes upon all—even upon me, who was his daughter. I never ventured to speak to him unless he addressed me."

If Hortense had been guilty of worse than a breach of good taste in paying her respects to Napoleon's supplanter,

she showed no desire to follow it up by further intercourse with the royal family, ignoring the King's hint that she would do well to present herself to the Duchesse d'Angoulême, and replying to his expression of a hope of future meetings that her place was no longer in the world and that she preferred a life of retirement. Louis, for his part, was full of praises of her manners, her tact, and her intelligence, and to Pozzo di Borgo in particular—no friend to the Imperial family—expressed his opinion that she was charming.

"I have never known," he said to another of his courtiers, "a woman combining so much grace with such distinguished manners."

There was a silence, broken by the Duc de Duras. All the world, he said, were agreed that the Duchesse de Saint-Leu was charming. It was unfortunate, and perhaps a cause of anxiety, that she was surrounded by the relentless enemies of the King. To which Louis made no reply.

It is clear, from the reports made by the Sûreté Générale, that if Hortense had desired to allay suspicion by her presence at the palace, she had not been successful. A strict watch continued to be kept upon her household, and in December, when she had returned to Paris for the winter, a detailed account was supplied of her manner of life. It was stated that she rose late, usually spent the morning in painting or in receiving the visits of artists, amongst whom were Garnerey, Richard, Thion, and others; conferring with men of business concerning the impending lawsuit.

She also frequently took walks with her children, gave parties twice a week, on other days saw but few guests. The names of those who frequented her salon were carefully noted ; and it was mentioned that her household was marked by much orderliness, but no display, and that she was greatly loved by those around her.¹ Flahault received his due share of attention in official reports, being described as still young, living with his mother and her husband, and though associating chiefly with Generals devoted to Bonaparte, not absenting himself altogether from Court.²

Hortense's return to Paris had not resulted in the increase of her general popularity. Her salon—at first only open to the select few who had cared to frequent her house at Saint-Leu—soon became an habitual place of resort for the young Bonapartists hitherto finding their evening amusements with royalist ladies, who, not without interest and entertainment, had been engaged in attempting the political conversion of such men as Labédoyère and Flahault. Hortense, it was true, conscious that her house was assuming the character of a political centre, was prudent enough to desire to render it less exclusively Bonapartist. With this view, a certain number of those professing opposite opinions, notably English, were admitted to it, whilst she preached caution and wisdom to the men who lacked them. But try as she might, in

¹ *Les secrets des Bonaparte* (Ch. Nauroy), pp. 158-9

² *Ibid.* p. 160.

her interest and her children's, to banish politics from her salon, it was no easy matter to restrain the hot-headed partisans of the Empire; and when Flahault and Labédoyère, amongst the most zealous of Imperialists, proceeding from words to acts, discarded the Cross of the Legion of Honour, on the score of the base uses to which it was now put, her remonstrances took little effect. Labédoyère would be happy to obey any other orders given by the Queen, but could not bring himself to wear the cross; and when Hortense appealed to his companion as the more level-headed of the two, Flahault protested that he was no calmer than Labédoyère and entirely shared his opinion. If they were to conspire, it would certainly, they said, not be in the rue Cérutti; but the most that their hostess could obtain was that their badges should be worn in her house, if not elsewhere.

"Nous faisons notre toilette chez son portier," said Labédoyère to Mademoiselle Cochelet gaily. He admired the Queen, he said, and, as a woman, she played her right part in attempting to produce peace; for himself, "Je veux être conspirateur," he announced frankly.

Taking into consideration the doubtful character borne, in spite of her efforts, by Hortense's house, it was natural that a visit paid her this winter by Wellington—introduced by Madame Récamier—should have been viewed with uneasiness by the authorities. It was remarked that the Englishman remained with the mistress

of the house in her cabinet more than an hour, and that, all the time he was at her house, contrary to his usual bearing, "which is of extreme *hauteur* and very grave," he showed the Duchess the greatest and most respectful deference, and paid marked attentions to her guests. It was added in the report that politics were talked little at the Duchess's house, as she did not permit it ; and that, two days before, she had observed to General Flahault's mother that these *têtes exaltées* should become more moderate and quiet.¹

According to Mademoiselle Cochelet, the conversation with Wellington had been concerned with misgivings the Queen entertained that the pledges of the Bourbons with regard to Napoleon's financial affairs would not be carried out, and that the Emperor would be placed in a difficulty. A step recently taken by the Government had been calculated to give rise to these fears. This had been the order issued by the authorities to place all Bonaparte property under seal. Warned of the intended measure, Hortense had taken precautions ; and when the official emissary appeared at her house, her diamonds had already been put into trustworthy hands. The order with regard to her possessions was subsequently rescinded, on the protest of her man of business. The proceeding afforded a disquieting indication of the direction in which the tide was setting. It had been at Christmas that the incident had occurred, and thus ended the disastrous year of 1814.

¹ *Les secrets des Bonaparte* (Ch. Nauroy), p. 162.

The first two months of 1815—to be followed by an episode of unparalleled excitement—passed for Hortense uneventfully. Her lawsuit was pursuing its course and must have been a constant source of anxiety. By an official report it appears that she was expected to be the winner, and when the judge's decision was given against her, on March 8, the blow would have been crushing, had not affairs then taken a turn rendering it for the moment of little importance.

Paris was in a condition of unrest. Each party viewed the other with suspicion, and the most extravagant rumours were in circulation. On the one hand, it was said that Chouans had been brought to the capital, to be a danger to peaceful citizens of Bonapartist opinions; whilst when the body of a General of Imperialist views was found in the Seine, it was rumoured that, distrusted by his comrades and acquainted with too many of their secrets, he had been assassinated by order of the Duchesse de Saint-Leu. Trifles, such as the bunches of violets daily sent to Hortense from Saint-Leu, gave rise to suspicion. Nor was the policy pursued by Louis, exemplified by such acts as the gift of the title of *Maréchale* to the widow of the conspirator, General Moreau—killed fighting in the Russian army, his face to his countrymen—adapted to conciliate adherents of the Empire.

In spite, however, of underground disquiet and dissatisfaction, and of the contempt, save amongst their

special friends and adherents, felt for the restored Bourbons, no definite apprehensions of a coming crisis had been entertained ; and the event destined to transform in a moment every aspect of European politics was as sudden, as unexpected, as if Napoleon had not been in existence. The news that he had left Elba fell like a bomb amongst his enemies.

CHAPTER XXI

1815

The return from Elba—The news received in Paris—Hortense in hiding—Napoleon's arrival—His displeasure—The hundred days—Changed conditions of Paris—Public ceremonials—The Emperor's departure—His parting with Louis Napoleon—Tidings of defeat—Waterloo—Abdication—In Paris and at Malmaison.

ON the wider European consequences of the return of Napoleon this is not the place to dwell. Ménéval, in attendance upon Marie Louise at Vienna, has left a picture of the consternation produced amongst the sovereigns assembled in the Austrian capital, when, like the announcement of a death in the middle of a feast, the momentous fact became known; of the silent activity by which the previous merry-making was replaced; of the Empress's vacillations and hesitations and fears, followed by her disavowal of complicity in her husband's designs, and her invocation of the protection of the allied powers.

The tidings reached Paris on March 7. The authorities had lost no time in taking their measures, the Comte d'Artois having left the capital during the night to oppose the Emperor's advance. It was one man against Europe; but that man was Napoleon.

On the following morning passers-by, not venturing to utter the great news aloud, were whispering it to each other in the streets. "I heard some one walking near me," says Lavallette, "and I was about to turn round, when these words were pronounced in a low voice, 'Make no gesture; show no surprise; do not stand still. The Emperor disembarked at Cannes on March 1; the Comte d'Artois left last night to go to fight him.'" And Lavallette—representative of Bonapartist faith and Bonapartist loyalty—moved on, breathless with emotion, and like a drunken man, asking himself, "Is it possible? Is it a dream, or the most cruel of jests?"¹

It was no dream, and Paris was soon sure of it. The tidings reached Hortense through an Englishman. As she was driving home from the Bois de Boulogne, Lord Kinnaird rode up to her carriage.

"You know the news?" he inquired, anxious, perhaps, to see how the woman credited by Royalists with a large share of responsibility for the event by which Europe was convulsed, would play her part. "The Emperor has landed from Elba."

Pale as death, the Queen stopped her carriage. Incredulous at first, she, like Lavallette, questioned, was it possible? Who, she asked, was Kinnaird's authority? He was not long in convincing her that he was repeating no idle report. He came straight, he told her, from the Duc d'Orléans, who was to join the Comte d'Artois. Troops were being at once dispatched.

¹ *Mémoires*, t. ii. p. 118.

For the rest, Napoleon had but few with him. The affair would be settled without delay.

Such was the Englishman's opinion. Hortense at first concurred in it, her imagination painfully conjuring up the inevitable catastrophe. "To die thus!" she cried passionately—"shot by Frenchmen!—Him! the Emperor!" Then, her thoughts reverting to her children, would they be in danger? she asked anxiously.

Kinnaird was not reassuring; he professed himself unable to reply. To seize the nephews of the Emperor as hostages would, in his opinion, be a not unnatural step. It was clear that their safety must be their mother's first care; and, hurrying home, she lost no time in arranging that the boys should be placed at nightfall in the house of a tried friend, where they might remain in concealment until it was seen what turn affairs would take.

Meanwhile, as to the great fact of the Emperor's disembarkment on French soil, there was no longer room for doubt; and it is possible that the Queen's terror began to give place to confidence inspired by her faith in Napoleon, since, when Lavallette hastened to the rue Cérutti, he describes her as shedding tears of joy and emotion. Her position was a critical one, and not without a possibility of danger. Whatever might be the ultimate results of the step taken by the Emperor, its immediate consequence was a marked development of hostility towards those of his blood. "Great irritation was displayed by the Royalists and

the bodyguard against my mother and her children," wrote Napoleon III. in after-days, "the rumour gaining currency that we were to be assassinated."¹ Reports of this kind, probably quite unfounded, will have increased Hortense's anxiety upon her sons' account, and under cover of the darkness the two little Princes were conducted to the place of retreat she had selected for them—a small apartment situated upon the boulevard. It was not without some demur upon the part of the elder of the boys.

"Where are you taking us?" he asked uneasily, as he and his brother were led through the gardens by their governess. "Why are we to be hidden? Is it because there is risk, and is *maman* to run it?"

Reassured, truly or falsely, on this point, there was nothing but pleasure for the children in the night expedition, enhanced by the necessity of silence and the sense of mystery; and her boys in safety, Hortense will have breathed more freely. Remaining behind in her salon—it was her night for receiving guests—she did the honours of her house as if in ignorance of the occurrence filling her with fear and hope and excitement.

Throughout the succeeding days one rumour followed fast upon the heels of another, confusing and bewildering. Sometimes it was asserted that the Emperor had been captured; then that he had escaped to the mountains. He would, it was said, in Royalist language, be tracked like a wild beast; Marshal Ney

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 73.

was falsely quoted as promising to bring him to Paris in a cage. Now it was affirmed that the troops could be relied upon to support the Bourbons and their government; then it was stated that Artois had returned, no longer able to count upon their loyalty. Ney's wife—Madame Campan's niece—on the other hand, visited the rue Cérutti, and there gave expression to her opinion of the Emperor's madness. Her husband, she said, was marching against him. No one would be found to recruit the Imperial forces.

Hortense listened to her former schoolmate with some coldness. She admitted that she, too, deplored the action taken by the Emperor; but to say that he would find none to embrace his cause was to forget what manner of man he was, as well as to misjudge the nation he had served. Ney's defection from the Royalist cause was soon to prove the Queen right, and to give the lie to his wife's asseverations. In the meantime, Labédoyère—happy, ill-starred Labédoyère—was to lead the way by carrying over the forces under his command to his master.

It was time for Hortense to take thought for her own safety. If her position had not been free from peril even whilst the Emperor's enterprise seemed hopeless to all whose faith in him was not blind, the possibility of his success rendered it doubly dangerous. Her house could scarcely fail to prove a rallying-place and centre for his partisans; and when the time-server Fouché, apprehensive of per-

sonal peril, obtained leave to escape through her garden, adjoining his own, he found himself, on scaling a wall, "as in a wonderful Arabian tale, suddenly in the midst of the Bonapartist *élite*, at the headquarters of the party."¹

The description may have been highly coloured ; at any rate, by the time to which it refers, the mistress of the house had been persuaded to take refuge, like her children, in a secret hiding-place, where she should be safe from either responsible or irresponsible vengeance. The house of a faithful créole servant, who had accompanied her mother from Martinique, having been selected for the purpose, the Queen was conducted to it in the darkness by a brother of her *lectrice*, her escort being not unnaturally exasperated and alarmed by the laughter to which she gave way as she walked, a grey cloak imperfectly concealing the laces she had forgotten to remove, towards her destination. Any moment might have brought detection, and her laughter, probably with little merriment in it, seemed to the young man as ill-timed as the hesitation she had shown in deciding so to transgress Court etiquette as to cross the streets on foot under his care. Her refuge reached, she was induced to remain there until the eventful March 20 arrived, and, Louis XVIII. having fled in the night, Napoleon's arrival was momentarily expected.

Before she left her place of shelter it was constantly

¹ *Mémoires de Fouché.*

becoming clearer that it would soon not be Bonapartists who would be forced to remain concealed, and Hortense was beginning to exchange her fears for a sense of compassion towards her opponents. Pity was a prominent feature of her character, and when it appeared that rumours were afloat that the Bourbons might be in danger, she sent a message to the Orléans to beg that, should they feel any uneasiness as to their children, they would consign them to her care. She, who had nothing to fear from the people, would answer for their security. The proffer of service, perhaps ill-advised, was not made, the intermediary employed by the Queen learning that to Hortense's account was charged, in the Orléans household itself, the very condition of Paris that was causing disquiet.

A further step taken by her at this juncture was yet more strangely wanting in tact, and can only be explained by the overstrained state of her brain and nerves. In her compassion for the fugitive King, she insisted upon addressing to him a letter of sympathy, replying to protests that, if she had erred in incurring obligations towards the Bourbons, it would be to act unworthily were she now to refuse to acknowledge them. Should the Emperor be displeased, he knew that she had ever been on the side of the defeated. If it cannot be denied that there was a certain amount of bad taste in her desire to offer her condolences to the chief sufferer, it is fair to remember that, three days later, in all the joyful excitement of Imperialist success,



From a picture by David. Photo by W. A. Marshall N.Y.C.

MADAME RICHARD.

she was not oblivious of a Royalist less highly placed, who might expect to suffer from the shifting of official scenery.

"I hope," she wrote to Madame Récamier, "that you are at ease, that you are not quitting Paris, where you have friends, and that you will leave me to care for your interests. I am persuaded that I shall not so much as have the opportunity of proving to you how glad I should be to be of use."¹

All cause for concealment was plainly at an end, and the Queen left her retreat in time to witness the replacing of Napoleon's statue in the Place Vendôme.

Events were succeeding one another with startling rapidity. Scarcely had Hortense returned to her house when an officer of the National Guard appeared to summon her to the Tuileries, where the Emperor's arrival was shortly expected. Lavallette, who also hastened to the Palace, has left an account of the interval of suspense that followed—of the great empty courtyard, where some five or six half-pay officers had met and were exchanging congratulations upon the turn affairs had taken ; of the two Queens, Hortense and the wife of Joseph Bonaparte, the only members of the family then in Paris, presently joined by the ladies of their households and those who had been attached to that of the Empress, and occupied in removing the lilies affixed to the carpet, so that the bees below became visible, "till in less than half an

¹ *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii. p. 279.

hour the carpet had, amidst laughter from all those assembled, became again Imperial.”¹

And still the Emperor had not arrived, and the hours of waiting must have seemed long. Paris was strangely quiet. One sovereign had fled from it, another was approaching, yet none could have guessed it. A singular apathy pervaded the capital, contrasting sharply with the wild enthusiasm shown by the peasantry who had lined the route to Paris in such numbers as to make the Emperor's advance a matter of difficulty. As Hortense and her friends awaited the moment of his coming, surely, in spite of their nervous laughter, it must have been chiefly in tense silence that they strained their ears for the sound of approaching feet.

At length, at nine o'clock in the evening, the prolonged suspense was ended. A carriage—a “*mauvais cabriolet*”—stopped at the gate of the Palace. Its master had reached it, accompanied by an immense throng which pressed into the vestibule and made the staircases impassable, and a great shout of “*Vive l'Empereur*” proclaimed his arrival to the Parisians who had remained indoors. None had eyes or attention for any object except the small figure in the grey *redingote*; and the two Queens, coming forth with greeting and welcome, unable so much as to reach the Emperor, were in danger of suffocation in the crowd.

“For God's sake,” cried the Duc de Vicenza, who had accompanied Napoleon, to Lavallette—“for God's sake, place yourself in front of him, that he may be

¹ *Mémoires de Lavallette*, t. ii. p. 132.

able to move on"; and Lavallette obeyed, his eyes full of tears, and repeating again and again, as he moved backwards, clearing a path for his master, "It is you . . . it is you—you, at last!"

Napoleon, "for his part, was mounting the stairs slowly; his eyes shut, his hands stretched out before him, like a blind man," but his lips smiling.¹ And so the Emperor came home.

His apartments gained, and the doors with difficulty shut upon the crowd, he made his greetings to the Queens, but without cordiality. Where were her children, he inquired of Hortense; expressing with cold displeasure his opinion of her line of conduct when she had explained that they were in concealment.

"You have placed my nephews in a false position, in the midst of my enemies," he told her sternly. "I count upon Eugène. I think he will come back. I wrote to him from Lyons."

That expectation, like others, was not destined to be realised. Marie Louise, his little son, and the boy he had brought up, whose fortunes he had secured, were none of them to gladden his eyes. For Hortense the meeting, after the long, exhausting day, must have been a bitter disappointment. When, at midnight, she reached her own house, she was worn out. One duty, however, could not be postponed, and before she slept she had given her brother an account of what was going forward in Paris. The letter was subsequently of

¹ *Mémoires de Lavallette*, t. ii. p. 133.

importance, as, seized by the enemy and placed before the Congress at Vienna, it produced an unfortunate effect upon its members. Alexander, according to Ménéval, "sous l'empire d'une violente exaltation," conceived he had a right to feel personally wounded by certain expressions the Queen used; and Eugène was compromised in the eyes of the Allies, the Czar, in particular, declining further communication with a man he had hitherto liked and trusted. Yet, if Hortense's memory is to be relied upon, corroborated by that of her *lectrice*, in whose memoirs the document finds a place, she had said little beyond what must have been expected from the step-daughter of the Emperor.

"MY DEAR EUGÈNE," thus it ran,—“An enthusiasm of which you have no conception brings the Emperor back to France. I have just seen him. He received me very coldly. I think he disapproves of my having remained here. He told me that he counted upon you, and had written to you from Lyons. *Mon Dieu*, if only we do not have war! It will not come, I hope, from the Emperor of Russia—he deplored it so much! Ah, speak to him for peace! Use your influence with him—it is a necessity for humanity. I hope I shall soon see you. I was obliged to hide during twelve days, because a thousand stories had been told about me. Adieu! I am dead with fatigue.”

So ended the eventful 20th of March.

Notwithstanding her weariness, Hortense was an early visitor next morning at the Tuileries, bringing with her

the boys, hastily withdrawn on the preceding evening from their hiding-place and dressed in hussar uniforms. Napoleon was not proof against the affection he had always borne the children connected with him by blood, and he received his nephews with visible emotion. It may be that, in seeing them, his thoughts reverted to his little son, and that the one meeting may have been an earnest and a pledge of another. But his anger was still hot against Hortense.

An account of the interview was long afterwards given by the Queen to Madame Récamier, and it is supplemented by details related by the Duchesse d'Abrantès. It was not without apprehension that Hortense had repaired to the Palace. "The Emperor," she told her friend, "always inspired me with fear ; nor had his tone in assigning me this rendezvous been reassuring." If she had expected that he would give further expression to his displeasure, her anticipations were fulfilled, for he took her to task at once and with bitterness.

"Did you so little understand your position," he asked, "as to have been capable of renouncing your name, the rank you held from me, and of accepting a title given by the Bourbons ? Was that your duty ?"

Hortense did her best to rally her courage.

"My duty, Sire," she answered, "was to think of my children's future, since your Majesty's abdication left me no other to perform."

"Your children !" exclaimed Napoleon. "Were they not my nephews before they were your sons ?"

Did you forget that ? Did you imagine you had the right to allow them to be degraded from the rank belonging to them ? ”

Nor was it against the living alone that his anger was directed. According to the Duchesse d'Abrantès—Hortense was silent on this point to her friend—Joséphine did not escape her share of censure, the Emperor dwelling in particular upon the fact that she had requested permission of his enemies to retain the title he had conferred upon her. She should, he said, have waited until it was certain that he was incapable of serving her ; whereas he had not been a month in banishment before she had been engaged in making terms with his persecutors.

From a spirited defence of the dead Empress, Hortense, bursting into tears, descended to appeal.

“ Sire, I conjure you to be good to my mother,” she entreated ; “ the last word she uttered was your name.”

If Napoleon was softened, he gave no sign of it.

“ The more reason to make it respected,” he retorted.

Excited by the argument, he had been walking rapidly up and down the room in which the interview had taken place. The window stood open, and the spring sun was shining outside. Following him, Hortense once more attempted to justify her conduct. She had, she pleaded, taken counsel with her heart alone. The Emperor stopped suddenly short.

“ Then it ought to have told you, madame,” he said, “ that when one has shared the prosperity of a family, one must know how to endure its adversities.”

The judgment was harsh, but there was a grain of truth in the implied reproach, calculated to appeal to Hortense, sensitive, generous, and impulsive ; and abandoning her defence, she was giving free way to her tears when an unexpected interruption occurred. Napoleon had unconsciously approached the open window looking upon the crowded terrace below ; and as the throng caught sight of their idol a wild storm of acclamation greeted him.

Regaining at once his accustomed calm, the Emperor acknowledged the salutations of the people, and discerning an opportunity of producing an impression upon the multitude, he seized and made instant use of it. Advancing to the balcony, he drew Hortense with him, her face wet with tears, and obliged her to take her part in the scene. The description of the incident in the next day's *Moniteur* gives the key to the light in which he wished it to be regarded. "His Majesty the Emperor"—so ran the paragraph in the official paper—"with Queen Hortense and the Princes, his nephews, was in his cabinet. The acclamations of the people . . . having summoned him to the balcony, Queen Hortense was so much moved by this proof of the attachment of the people of Paris that she melted into tears, offering to the crowd the touching spectacle of her countenance bathed in tears caused by the love of the people for its great father."¹

¹ *Mémoires de la Restauration: La Duchesse d'Abrantès*, t. ii. pp. 113-7. *Souvenirs et Correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii. pp. 76-80.

That day Hortense wrote a second letter, destined, like the first, to serve as evidence against her with those who were to be once more arbiters of her fate. The present one was sent at the Emperor's desire, and, addressed to his wife, conveyed the assurance of the happiness he would feel in seeing her again. Napoleon's motive in making his stepdaughter his channel of communication remains undetermined ; but the fact was remembered and resented in the future, as well as the suggestion contained, according to Ménéval, in her letter, that she should herself meet the Empress at Strasbourg.

If it were to be counted to her as a crime that she had welcomed the Emperor on his return to his capital, there was no doubt that she was guilty of it. That she had not conspired to bring him back, that she had had no hand in the initiation of his hazardous enterprise, she constantly affirmed ; nor is there any reason to distrust her statement. But to encourage a desperate venture and to rejoice in its apparent success are wholly different matters ; and it would have been strange indeed if Hortense had failed to do the last. Affection, generosity, what ambition she had, the consideration of her children's future—all enlisted her sympathies on the side of the man who was now standing on his defence against the whole of Europe, nor was she ever an apostate from the Imperialist faith.

Meanwhile, in the absence of Marie Louise, it devolved upon the Queen to fill her place, so far as it

could be filled, and to do the honours of the Palace. Though continuing to live at her own house, she repaired to the Tuileries every evening, and there, as well as at the rue Cérutti, court was paid to the reconstituted Queen by many who had been lately less assiduous in their attentions.

"You were in the country this winter, madame," said one lady, "when I called several times to see your Majesty."

"Yes, madame," was the Queen's reply; but she smiled.

"As for me," said another in an audible aside, "I always called her Queen, never Duchesse de Saint-Leu."

A vindictive spirit was not amongst Hortense's failings, and she proved it by her successful endeavour to obtain permission for the Dowager Duchesse d'Orléans and the Duchesse de Bourbon to remain in Paris. A pension was, further, allotted to each by the intercession of the woman who was persistently charged by Royalists with being responsible for the Emperor's return. The messenger to whom her ill-judged letter to Louis XVIII. had been entrusted had wisely refrained from forwarding it to its destination, on discovering the animus against her in the very man—one of the La Rochefoucaulds—to whom he had been on the point of consigning it. "Can you conceive such dissimulation!" the latter had exclaimed in reference to the Queen. "Is it possible to deceive with so sweet an air?" It would

have been useless to attempt to combat a prejudice thus widespread, though Hortense's attempts to remove the disabilities of Royalists were not discontinued in consequence of their distrust. "It always seemed that she had won a victory when she had obtained a favour for some unfortunate person."

As March passed into April and April into May, Napoleon learnt that the Paris of 1815 was not the Paris he had quitted a year earlier. It had tasted of liberty, and desired more; it was no longer disposed to bow to the autocracy of a monarch, however great. The declaration made by the Council of the sovereignty of the people was charged with significance. Even trifles indicated the turn in the tide; and the absolute deference that had, in older days, marked the bearing of subordinates had undergone a subtle change. "What, am I left like that?" the Emperor asked Lavallette, smiling yet surprised, when the latter, his business finished and feeling that he was required elsewhere, was about to quit the royal presence without waiting for dismissal; and Lavallette, loyal as he was, secretly acknowledged that he would not have acted after this fashion a year before. Again, the desire for glory, for conquest, had given place to a dominating longing for peace—the peace declared by the Allies to be impossible so long as Napoleon was at the head of the State. The conviction that his sovereignty meant war, soaking gradually into the mind of the country, gave it ample food for reflection and was of a nature to cool public enthusiasm.

It seems singular that when, with all Europe

banded together against him, Napoleon can have had little leisure for domestic affairs, his brother Louis should have written to renew his demand for permission to divorce his wife. Once more it was refused, in terms, according to the *Mémorial de Saint-Hélène*, indicating a curious oblivion of their bearing on the Emperor's own past. Divorce, he told Louis, was formally forbidden by the Family Statute ; policy, morals, and opinion were no less opposed to it.

Pressed with business of all kinds as he was, the thoughts of Napoleon reverted to the past, and—in the voluntary absence of the wife by whom he had replaced Joséphine—he expressed a desire to visit Malmaison, intimately connected with his happiest years of domestic life. Hortense, acquainted with his wish, shrank from the ordeal. Never after her mother's death had she returned to Joséphine's favourite home. Reaching it the night before her stepfather was expected there, she faced alone the memory of past days, a profound discouragement overshadowing her spirits. "Would her mother," she questioned, "have been happy had she now been living? Was it not those who remained who should rather be compassionated, since for them there was neither joy nor peace?" With the Emperor, too, the past was vividly present, and who can tell how far the bitterness of remorse mingled with regret for the dead? When house and woods had been inspected, and the homage of the civic authorities of the district had been paid, he asked to see Joséphine's death-chamber.

"No," he said, with unusually gentle consideration,

as the Queen rose to conduct him thither—"no, Hortense. Remain here, my daughter; I will go alone. It would agitate you too much."

Silently Hortense obeyed—her eyes were full of tears; and Napoleon, unaccompanied, entered the room where his forsaken wife had fought her last battle far from him and alone. Returning to the salon, his eyes, too, were wet.

There was, however, little leisure for the indulgence of private and sentimental regrets. If the Emperor's position was to be maintained, no means of strengthening it could be neglected. The less secure his seat upon the throne, the more need to surround it with a brilliance dazzling to the public eye. A stable and settled Government may be able to disregard effect; to authority established upon a precarious basis, every appeal to the imagination has its use, and Napoleon was not backward in testifying to his sense of the importance of ceremonial and spectacular display. On April 24 he held a review of the Guards. The scene is described by an English eye-witness.

Chancing to be in Paris at the moment, Hobhouse had been accorded an entrance to the Tuileries, and from a window of the room allotted to Hortense he looked down upon the crowd assembled below, and noted the anxiety shown by the women gathered together at the Palace as the Emperor's arrival was delayed. When Napoleon at length drew near, the cry of *Vive l'Empereur*, heralding his approach, announced that all was well; yet it was no wonder if those whose fate and future hung upon his

single life should have trembled for his safety. For two long hours, as their great captain watched the troops march past, any assassin, observes the spectator, "unless disarmed by his face of fascination," could have shot him.

Even in the eyes of a foreigner, unbiassed by nationality or race in favour of the chief actor, it was a memorable and noteworthy day ; and in Hobhouse's account of it the electric thrill of the emotion and enthusiasm charging the atmosphere is discernible. "The vast palace of Kings, the moving array before me, the deep mass of flashing arms in the distance, the crowd around, the apparatus of war and empire, all disappeared, and in the first gaze of admiration I saw nothing but Napoleon—the single individual to destroy whom the earth was rising in arms from the Tanais to the Thames." ¹

One other scene stands out upon the shifting, many-coloured background of those days of restless excitement. On June 1, at the assemblage of the Champ de Mai, Napoleon distributed the eagles, badges of the Empire, to the troops. It was a fine sight, says Lavallette, regarding it with the impartial wisdom possibly taught by subsequent events, "but it was not the whole of France, nor was sentiment, save in the crowd, sincerely in favour of the Emperor." He may have been right—the sequel goes far to prove him so ; yet it must have been difficult to look below the surface and divine the cold indifference or fermenting discontent

¹ Hobhouse's *Letters from Paris*, vol. i. pp. 32-6.

underlying it; and ears filled with the enthusiastic plaudits of the multitude may easily have been deaf to the murmurs of dissenters from the popular faith. Again Hobhouse, cool and observant, but as before not uninfected by the contagious passion of the throng, was present at the demonstration, and watched the crowded area of the theatre, the innumerable standard-bearers, the glittering eagles, the coloured banners, the purple and gold of the throne. He saw Hortense's two little sons take the seats prepared for them in the *tribune*, noted the Emperor's three brothers—even Lucien was there, and Louis alone absent—ranged on either side of him, arrayed in "white fancy-dresses, and looking, excepting the House of Austria," observes the Englishman, "as ill as the Princes of any legitimate house in Christendom."¹ A French spectator, General Thiébault, has also left a description of the magnificent *coup d'œil*. "Though it was calculated to absorb the attention and the eye, I still seem to see Hortense sketching the imposing picture. At her side were her two sons, not less remarkable for their beauty than for their graceful hussar uniforms."²

One more great State function, and the last. On June 6, the Chambers met and took the oath of allegiance—so quickly to be broken—to the Emperor, surrounded by his brothers, again in their white "fancy-dresses," his mother and Hortense near, and Labédoyère—the doomed Labédoyère—conspicuous

¹ Hobhouse's *Letters*, vol. i. p. 408.

² *Mémoires*, t. v. p. 338.

by his beauty, standing behind the throne. "Si beau et si perfide," a Royalist present was overheard to observe, as her eyes rested upon the young man.

The drama of those hundred days was drawing towards its close. Looking back upon them, reading the records left by men who shared in their excitement and who participated in the vivid life by which they were crowded, it is possible—even after a century, or close upon it—to realise the tense anxiety, the terror, and the hope marking each one of them. In the motley crowd collected in Paris, mixing as acquaintances, sometimes as friends, jostling each other in the very Palace, soldiers who had fought side by side on the same battlefields, every shade and variety of opinion was represented. There were men loyally attached to the ancient royal house, however decadent, to whom Napoleon, returned from his place of exile, was the "fantôme ennemi" of Hugo's ode; others who feared him because he was strong, and to whom the weakness of the Bourbons was their recommendation; generals and politicians who hated, because they had betrayed, their great chief, and who could neither forgive him their disgrace nor trust him to pardon it; thinkers who saw in him the epitome of the past greatness of France and her only hope for the future; and lastly, some who loved him as a soldier loves his captain, as a loyalist loves his King, as man loves man and friend friend.

The fate of Paris, of France, of Napoleon, and with him of Hortense and her children, was quickly to be

decided. Very early on the morning of Monday, June 12, the Emperor was to leave his capital, to return to it, in hardly more than a week, a defeated and broken-hearted man. On the night preceding his departure all the Imperial family were bidden to a dinner at the Palace, the two little Princes being likewise brought to the Tuileries to take leave of their uncle. Regnault de Saint-Jean d'Angely has described the parting between Napoleon and the younger of them—the child destined to bear his name and wear the Imperial crown. Grave and preoccupied as he had good reason to be, the Emperor had entered his cabinet with Soult, when Louis, now seven years old, crept into the room and, drawing near, knelt down at his side, laid his head on his knees and burst into tears. Annoyed at the interruption, his uncle spoke sharply.

“What is the matter, Louis?” he asked. “Why have you come here? What are you crying for?”

At first the child, frightened, only answered by sobs; then, becoming quieter, “Sire,” he replied, “my *gouvernante* has just told me that you are leaving for the war. Do not go!—do not go!”

Why not? the Emperor inquired, not untouched. It was not the first time, he said, that he had gone forth to fight. He would come back. The boy only wept the more.

“Ces méchants alliés veulent vous tuer,” he sobbed. “Laissez-moi aller avec vous.”

Napoleon lifted the child to his knee and kissed him.

"*Tenez ! Hortense,*" he said, calling his stepdaughter, "take my nephew away, and give a severe reprimand to his *gouvernante*, who has worked upon the child's feelings by her careless words."

Soult had watched the scene with some emotion. Perceiving it, before consigning the boy to his mother, the Emperor turned to the Marshal.

"Kiss him," he said. "He will have a good heart and a fine soul ; . . . he may be the hope of my race."¹

A few hours more and he was gone, leaving those who remained behind to wait, in fear and trembling, for the result of this ultimate venture.

The first news from the army was good. On June 17 and 18 tidings were brought of French successes ; Hortense was overwhelmed with congratulations ; and, reassured as to any immediate cause for anxiety, pursued her customary way of life. On the 20th a few of her acquaintances had collected at the rue Cérutti to hear Benjamin Constant read aloud a new work, and the audience were paying the tribute of tears to his literary powers, when the Queen was called from the room to receive the Duc de Rovigo, come to inquire if she had fresh tidings from the army, and to mention that, though apparently without foundation, sinister rumours were abroad. In the evening the usual gathering took place in her salon, and conversation was going on gaily when the Queen was once more summoned to a private interview. It was not till some time later that she returned, unchanged in mien and

¹ Quoted in *La Jeunesse de Napoléon III.* (Pol.), pp. 7-8.

bearing, though anxious eyes noted that she was paler than before. The news that had been brought was of the battle of Waterloo.

That evening Hortense played her part well and bravely, aided, it may be, by the knowledge that there were those present to whom the intelligence of the Imperial calamity would have occasioned nothing but joy. Her guests, earlier than usual, were dismissed in ignorance of what had befallen. Yet the Queen indulged in no illusions as to the situation. "For the Emperor all is at an end," she said. "It is France for whom thought must be taken. They received him with acclamation, they had need of his powerful genius, they expected triumphs, good fortune, from it. He has been unfortunate ; all the world will forsake him."

Napoleon arrived a few hours after intelligence of the lost battle had reached the capital. Already the whisper of a second abdication had been heard. Labédoyère, at Hortense's house, vehemently deprecated the possibility. "Would you rather," the Queen answered mournfully, "that the Chambers should depose him?" By the next day the step condemned so strongly by a large portion of the army had been taken ; and the King of Rome had been proclaimed Emperor in his father's place. There was no longer any reason that Napoleon should remain in Paris, and he expressed his wish to remove to Malmaison, now the property of Eugène. Hortense made ready to go thither to receive him, her intention meeting with strong protests from

her friends. The step, they reasoned, would serve to give colour to the suspicions entertained concerning her, and would be compromising in the eyes of the authorities. That it can have been conceivable that his stepdaughter should have deserted the fallen Emperor in his hour of need is a measure of the prevailing condition of panic, and to praise her for her determination to share his fate would be to do her the dishonour of implying that any other line of conduct was possible. She cut short the arguments directed against it. If there was danger, the more cause that she should be associated in it, she said. It was a duty ; and the greater the risks run by the Emperor, the happier she was in proving her devotion to him. Before she left Paris, Labédoyère visited the rue Cérutti, fresh from the Assembly, where, as a member of the Upper Chamber, he had indignantly reminded those ranged openly or secretly against their master of the oath of fidelity so recently taken.

"Are we never to hear in this place," he had cried passionately, "anything but perjuries?"

If the Queen, according to her custom, blamed his violence, it can have been but faintly ; and he remained to dine with her. As the guests took their places, it was observed that they numbered thirteen.

"Have no fear," answered Labédoyère, overhearing what was said. "From the turn matters are taking, it is very likely that it will be I who will be the thirteenth missing from the roll-call by the time that a year has passed by."

The choice of Fouché as President of the Provisional Government was an ominous one. Napoleon had expressed his opinion of the Minister when he observed to Ménéval, on the eve of leaving France, that he ought to have had him hanged. "I leave that care," he added grimly, "to the Bourbons."¹ Fouché was not the only traitor. The Chambers, and not a few of the Generals and Marshals of the army, were anxious to be dissociated from their fallen chief, and to make terms with "nos amis, les ennemis." Worse than all, the Emperor's spirit was, for the moment, broken. On the 24th he quitted his capital, carrying out his intention of repairing to Malmaison ; where Hortense, having again placed her sons in concealment, was waiting to play for the last time the part of daughter to the man who had been to her as a father. Whatever might be the risk to herself or even to her children, she did not shrink from running it, and the boys were brought from their hiding-place to take a last leave of their uncle.

Other farewells were to take place at Malmaison. Napoleon was to bid a final adieu to the memories clustering around its walls and gardens, and serving as a setting to the figure of the woman he had once adored.

"I seem," he said, "to see her come from the garden walk, and gather one of the flowers she loved so well. She was more full of graces than any woman I ever saw."

¹ *Mémoires de Ménéval*, t. iii. p. 554.

Time was short, whether for memory or for regret. It had been arranged that the Emperor should start for Rochefort, and, with or without his consent, the Provisional Government were determined that his departure should not be delayed. So eager, indeed, were they to be relieved at the earliest possible date of the responsibility implied by his neighbourhood, that when Flahault, as his aide-de-camp, applied to Davoust, Minister of War, for a respite of twenty-four hours, it was refused in terms of contemptuous insult.

"Tell your Bonaparte," answered the Marshal, "that if he does not set out at once, I will go in person to compel him to do so."

Flahault might break his sword, resign his commission, and quit the Minister's presence declaring that he would consider it for the future a dishonour to serve under him—the Emperor had no alternative but to obey.

At Malmaison, the home of the mother who had been the link uniting them, Hortense's parting with Napoleon fitly took place. She had acted with courage and generosity ; and her last act was to induce him, not without difficulty, to accept her diamond necklace, sewn up in a black band, to be carried concealed about his person, in order that, in case of necessity, funds might be at hand. Thus terminated a relationship which had lasted for close upon twenty years.

CHAPTER XXII

1815—1816

Hortense's plans in question—The army offered as her escort—Labédoyère in Paris—Alexander's changed attitude—Hortense's journey to Geneva—Difficulties in finding a shelter—Aix—Parting with Prince Napoleon—The winter at Constance—Visit of Prince Eugène—The Queen returns it—The Landmann's proposal of marriage—Louis Bonaparte's letter.

THE question for Hortense, as for France, was, Napoleon gone, what was to follow? On the future of the country opinions varied. Some cherished the hope that the nation would be permitted by the allied Powers to select its ruler, and that the discredited Bourbons would not again be forced upon it. Others, mere clear-sighted, foresaw that the projected surrender of the capital by the Provisional Government, without a blow struck in its defence, would seal the fate of the country, and that it would be disposed of at the will of the conquerors. Some few had clung, for a brief space, with vehement persistency, to the possibility of resistance.

It was patent to all that the Emperor's departure had deprived any such scheme of its forlorn hope of success, and those faithful to Napoleon turned their thoughts to Hortense and her children, exposed to

danger in Paris. On July 1 a certain number of officers visited the rue Cérutti, and, representing to the Queen that, by the arrangements agreed upon, the French troops were to evacuate the capital and to leave it in the possession of the Bourbonists and their foreign allies, proposed that she, with her sons, should withdraw with the army, proud to serve as her escort until a place of security should be reached. To accept the offer would have been to lend colour to every report in circulation as to Hortense's propensity to political intrigue, and to strengthen the conviction that she was a standing menace to peace. Though not ungrateful, she at once negatived the suggestion. She must, she said, confront the fate in store for her. She no longer occupied any position justifying her in making use of the services of the army, or in intermingling her private destiny with the destiny of France. Had she been the sovereign, it would have been a different matter. Under the present circumstances, it was her intention to leave the country for ever, so soon as passports could be obtained.

Lovers of France could have little desire to witness her humiliation. On July 3 a formal convention was concluded between the Allies and the Provisional Government; on the 6th the foreign Powers took possession of the capital; and two days later Louis XVIII. made his state entry into the city from which he had fled three months earlier, surrounded by the nobles who were the only portion of the nation hailing his return with genuine satisfaction. His train was

swelled by not a few of the Marshals whose laurels had been won under the great captain now gone for ever. As Hortense sat that evening in the little garden of the secret retreat whither, in view of the open hostility displayed towards her, she had been persuaded to retire with her children, Mademoiselle Cochelet recounted the events of the day, roused to something like impatience by the calm, resembling indifference, displayed by her hearer.

"You listen as if it was the history of the last century that I was telling you," she exclaimed.

"It is the same to me as if it were," answered the Queen. "All for us is at an end!"

Lodgings had been prepared for the foreign princes in the palaces and hôtels of the city; and the Austrian Prince Schwartzemberg was installed in the lower part of Hortense's house by the time that she quitted her place of concealment to make preparations for her departure. The Hungarian band was playing in the courtyard, filled with soldiers; all was life and movement in the portion of the house assigned to the invaders. In Hortense's private apartments, in sharp contrast, the silence and melancholy of defeat reigned. That evening she had a visitor. It was Labédoyère, who, having first, at imminent risk to his safety, taken order with the noisy Prussians quartered in his house, was come in disguise to bid the Queen farewell before leaving Paris.

"You wish to be arrested?" she asked him, with some impatience.

“ Oh, pour cela, non ! ” he replied. “ They would be too much pleased at it—the dear Bourbonists. They would try me, sentence me to death, and then show their generosity, out of consideration to my wife’s family and entreaties. I wish for no favours from them.”

The sequel proved that he need not have feared that their clemency would be forced upon him. When he left the rue Cérutti, Hortense had parted from him for the last time. A few weeks later he had met his death. It was necessary that the Queen should quit Paris as speedily as possible. But difficulties stood in the way. Passports must be obtained, and in the present condition of the country a journey undertaken by an unprotected woman and young children, the objects of violent animosity in some quarters, would manifestly be attended with danger. To counsellors who would have urged her to invoke the protection of Alexander, Hortense had from the first returned an absolute refusal. The situation, she contended, had changed since the previous year. Then it had been her family alone at whom the blow had been aimed. It was now directed against France, and it was impossible that she should, under the circumstances, make an appeal to the conquerors. Had she been otherwise disposed, it was clear that the Czar, no less than herself, had decided against any renewal of the friendly relations of 1814. Whether or not he had been wounded by the language used in her letter to her brother ; whether he had been infected by the general opinion of her

double-dealing, or whether he acted in compliance with the request said by his subordinate, Boutiakim, to have been made by Louis XVIII. that, as a personal favour, Alexander would have no further intercourse with the Queen, his attitude was quickly made plain. Visiting the rue Cérutti for the purpose of calling upon Prince Schwartzberg, he totally ignored the mistress of the house ; and further, when it had been falsely reported that the Duchesse de Saint-Leu had presented herself to him, a direct contradiction was inserted in the official organ, coupled with the statement that, had she done so, she would not have been received. He withdrew, in fact, openly and markedly, any support the Queen might have derived from the recollection of his former goodwill and friendship, and it became publicly known that, so far as he was concerned, she would be left to fight her enemies alone. "The magnanimous Alexander," observed Hobhouse, "is not so magnanimous as he was last year. He finds the folly of throwing away his favours upon a people insensible of the benefits of being beaten and the advantages of a Cossack conquest."

It was nevertheless evident that, without protection from either Bourbons or their allies, Hortense and her children could not, in the present excited condition of the country, be considered safe from outrage ; and the Duc de Vicenza, Napoleon's most faithful adherent, besought her, Alexander's attitude notwithstanding, to demand his assistance and passports enabling her to leave the country. Hortense at last wavered. When

she replied, it was to say that she would prefer to be indebted for what was necessary to the Emperor of Austria. He owed her nothing, and upon his friendship she had never counted. Her instinct was a true one. It is better to be under an obligation to an open enemy than to a friend estranged. In the end her plans were decided for her. The rumour of a Bonapartist plot served to accelerate the proceedings of those quick to suspect her of participation in any Imperial intrigue; on July 19 she suddenly received orders from the Prussian General Müffling to quit Paris within two hours, and there was no alternative but to obey. Comte de Woyna, Chamberlain of the Emperor of Austria, was appointed, on her refusal to accept an escort furnished by the allied forces, to accompany the travellers and to be responsible for their safety; and that same evening she took leave of her household, and with her children left Paris. It was time. The *Moniteur*, announcing on the following day the capture of Napoleon, added, "Thus has terminated an enterprise conceived by Bonaparte, and executed by the help of" fifteen men whose names followed, "and Mesdames Hortense, Souza, and Hamelin." "This paragraph," observed Hobhouse, "may be considered a decided denunciation, and the names given a list of the proscribed. If M. de Vitrolles is the author of the article, he has forgotten that his life was saved at the intercession of the Princess Hortense."¹

¹ Hobhouse's *Letters*, vol. i. p. 206.

It was a juncture when many persons found a short memory convenient; nor was Vitrolles the only person to display one. Hortense carried with her from Paris letters not four months old, from Louis Philippe's mother, the Dowager Duchesse d'Orléans, and his aunt, the Duchesse de Bourbon, expressing their gratitude for the fact that she had obtained for them pensions, together with permission to remain in France. Yet not a voice was raised on her behalf.

Partisans of the Bonapartist cause did well to leave Paris. The Bourbon vengeance, which was to prove so sanguinary, was beginning. On July 18 Lavallette was taken to the prison he would have quitted for the scaffold had not his wife contrived and carried out his escape. Labédoyère's capture followed. Less prudent than his cousin, Flahault, who, upon the dissolution of the army, had lost no time in seeking safety across the frontier, he had insisted upon re-visiting Paris, where he was discovered and arrested.

The Queen's journey was not unattended with danger. At Dijon her hôtel was surrounded by a furious crowd, partly composed of well-dressed men and women; and it needed the interposition of her escort, supported by Austrian soldiers quartered in the town, to prevent her being taken prisoner by some officers of the French Royal Guard. The Austrians were equal to the occasion. What did they mean? asked the General angrily of the disturbers of the peace. Was it he or they who commanded in that place? The

Queen should depart when it pleased her to do so, and none had a right to prevent her. At other towns upon her route the tables were turned ; Bonapartist sentiment was in the ascendant, and it fell to her share to protect the foreigners from the infuriated mob.

It was with relief that Geneva was reached. A small estate belonging to Joséphine, Prégny, on the shores of the lake, had been inherited by Hortense, and here she had intended to fix her abode. Fate had decreed otherwise ; the authorities, alarmed at the presence of so suspicious a guest, took instant measures to prohibit her establishment in the neighbourhood, and the utmost that could be obtained by Woyna was permission for his charge to remain there a few days, until he should have had time to communicate with his superiors and receive their instructions. Even this respite was withdrawn, and possibly uneasy at meetings between Hortense and *Madame Mère*, Cardinal Fesch, and other Bonapartists, all travelling south by way of the Swiss town, it was presently notified to the Austrian officer that no further delay could be allowed. The unfortunate Woyna, a tall boy of twenty, blue-eyed and fair-haired, turned in despair to M. de Marmold, who, as her equerry, formed part of Hortense's reduced household.

"What am I to do with the Queen ?" he asked, weighted by a responsibility with which he felt unable to cope.

Hortense smiled. "Throw me into the lake," she suggested. "After all, I must be somewhere."

Woyna, perplexed and anxious, left the room hastily.

"I really do not understand the Queen," he told Marmold, with natural and boyish irritation. "Her tranquillity, her life, perhaps, is at stake, and she contrives to treat matters as a jest. One recognises the frivolity of Frenchwomen," ended the German severely.

Made acquainted with her escort's dissatisfaction, Hortense had a conversation with him, and testified a readiness to discuss the situation with becoming gravity. If she had suffered too much, she told him, to feel anxious about fresh misfortunes, she was not ungrateful for his efforts and zeal on her behalf; and in the end it was arranged that she should go to Aix, in Savoy, and stay there whilst the young count returned to Paris for instructions. The lad had probably fallen under the Queen's charm; and had she been willing to follow his advice, it was always at her service.

"Go to Austria, madame—go to Austria," he urged whenever fresh difficulties barred her path. But to Austria Hortense was in no wise disposed to go.

At Aix a meeting took place with Flahault, safely arrived there. But again the presence of two eminent Bonapartists in the town was considered unadvisable by the authorities, and in an official report to Fouché—now restored to office—dated August 15, the Prefect of Mont Blanc stated that, uneasy at the

conjunction of the visitors, he had repaired to Aix and had caused the matter to be represented to the Duchesse de Saint-Leu, together with the desirability that Flahault should, of his own accord, absent himself from the town so long as she was there. His observation, he added, had been *sentie*, and Flahault was to depart that morning.¹ The wise and prudent prefect had shown the utmost respect to the fugitive Queen, making, according to Mademoiselle Cochelet, every profession of devotion, and offering any possible service she might desire from him. Some of the local officials were less polite, and it was intimated to her in no courteous manner that she was under the personal supervision of the authorities. Others were taking thought for the exile in more friendly fashion, nor was it unnecessary. A Royalist reaction had set in in southern France; Marshal Bruné had been murdered at Avignon; and whilst the Government was executing its enemies according to the forms of law, the country was wreaking vengeance on them in more summary fashion. Rumours of plots against those of Bonaparte blood were current, and the Austrian General commanding at Lyons sent an aide-de-camp to confer with Appel, replacing Woyna in charge of the Queen, as to the measures to be taken to ensure her safety and that of her boys.

By September authorisation had arrived from Paris for the Duchess's residence in Switzerland under the surveillance of the Four Courts and of His Most

¹ *Secrets des Bonaparte* (Ch. Nauroy), p. 163.

Christian Majesty. The permission of the Swiss Government was necessary, and the offer of passports was significantly coupled with advice that, before accepting it, the Queen should ascertain that that permission would be granted.¹ If the wanderer had been led to indulge a hope that she would at last be allowed to find a resting-place at Prégny, she was soon undeceived. A letter addressed by the Préfet du Département de l'Ain to the French Minister of Police shows that Geneva was in no wise inclined to receive her.

"Persons who watched the manœuvres of the Bonapartists last year," wrote that official, "have no doubt that they were seconded by this lady and her brother-in-law Joseph. . . . I do not conceal from you that her residence at Prégny will be accompanied by grave inconvenience, and will lend confirmation to absurd rumours in circulation. The considerable gifts that, through benevolence or some other motive, this lady scatters around her conciliates the affection of the people, and will attract to her many auxiliaries, in the event, scarcely allowing of doubt, that she should attempt to injure the Government. It would be very easy for her to do so in a country equally ill disposed, and where so little attachment is found to the Royalist cause."² It was plain that, should Hortense be allowed to make her home at Geneva, M. le Préfet washed his hands of the consequences. On the other hand, the

¹ *Secrets des Bonaparte* (Ch. Nauroy), p. 164.

² *Ibid.* pp. 167-8.

more friendly Prefect of Mont Blanc, writing in November to Paris to forward her request for a prompt decision, added that her conduct at Aix had been in no way reprehensible, and that he did not perceive that she kept up any intelligence with the Austrian Generals¹—of whom, it would appear, their Bourbon *protégés* had already become jealous.

It was at this juncture that the unhappy Queen received a blow compared with which others were insignificant. Her boy was to be taken from her. It was not to be expected that, now that Louis was in a position to enforce the claims admitted by the tribunal to which they had been referred, he should have failed to make good his legal rights; and in September the Baron de Zuite appeared at Aix, charged with the duty of taking possession of the Prince and conducting him to Rome, where his father had fixed his dwelling-place.

Crushing as was the blow, there was no alternative but submission; and although, feeling small confidence in her husband's envoy, Hortense delayed the child's departure until she should have summoned from Paris a guardian to whom he could be more safely entrusted, the interval did no more than prolong the pain of parting. Some decision as to her own future could not be longer deferred. Her visit to Aix had been merely a temporary expedient, and even there suspicion had dogged her footsteps. No story was too improbable to find acceptance with those to whom

¹ *Secrets des Bonaparte* (Ch. Nauroy), pp. 171-2.

the very name she bore was a danger-signal and a warning to be on the alert; and when her boys played their games of mimic war, it was gravely reported that she was engaged in raising regiments in Savoy. If it was admitted on all hands to be undesirable that she should reside at Aix, the obstacles placed in the way of the realisation of any project she might form as to other places of abode were not removed, each Swiss district being reluctant to receive so compromising a guest, or to incur the odium of having afforded her shelter.

The uncertainty hanging over her fortunes had the advantage of rendering her less unwilling to consign Prince Napoleon to his father's care; and the thought that she was still a fugitive unprovided with any permanent home was his mother's sole consolation in a parting which left her shattered in health and spirits, and in a condition of absolute prostration accompanied by frequent fainting fits. In her isolation and sorrow, the ties of blood may have gained added strength; and pending the consideration by the various authorities concerned of the question whether she should be permitted to settle in the canton of St. Gall, the Queen determined to ask leave to traverse Switzerland, with the object of reaching Constance, situated in the dominion of the Grand Duke of Baden, husband of Stéphanie de Beauharnais. If, however, her thoughts turned longingly towards her cousin, it was her brother to whom she clung the most; and a letter received from

him brought her the comfort supplied by evidence of his loyal affection and raised her drooping spirits.

"There is still some one in the world who loves me," she said. The anxiety evinced by the Prince was a motive for exertion, and with renewed energy and courage she prepared to seek afresh a resting-place. Courage was not uncalled for. It must be borne in mind that for years to come she was intimately associated in public opinion with the man whose name was a terror to Europe ; and she could count few or no protectors in high places. Madame de Krüdener might vouch for Alexander's continued interest ; he had given no sign of it, and on his late passage through Switzerland had not so much as appeared aware of her presence in the country. Austria, up to this date charged with responsibility for her safety, had suddenly and unaccountably recalled its representative, M. Appel having received laconic instructions to meddle no further in the Queen's affairs and to leave her without delay ; and when the requisite passports were at length obtained, the event was again to prove that a journey through districts hostile and suspicious, at a time when popular sentiment—if not locally Imperialist—was violently opposed to Bonapartists, was attended by certain inconvenience and possible risk.

At Prégny, where a night had to be spent, the house was surrounded by gendarmes, and a domiciliary visit was paid, that the authorities might be assured that Joseph Bonaparte, disguised as a maid-servant, was not included in the party. At Morat the Queen was

actually put under arrest, and detained until M. de Marmold had had time to remonstrate with the magnates of the canton ; and at Berne the head of the police called upon her, again with the object of obtaining information as to her brother-in-law. He was not likely to succeed, and she congratulated herself, after a prolonged and private interview with the baffled official, upon having proved her sex to be less indiscreet than is commonly supposed.

Constance was at length reached, after a journey of nine days through wintry weather, on December 7—the day upon which Ney was to pay the last penalty for his fidelity—and it must have been with lively satisfaction that the Queen arrived at what she trusted would be a permanent place of abode.

Although the accommodation available was of the humblest description, the provincial town promised peace and repose to the wearied travellers. "Its streets, the silent squares, where grass must surely grow in summer-time, the quiet bearing of its good and hospitable inhabitants—all this look of tranquillity was infinitely pleasant to the Queen." The wide expanse of shining water, the snow mountains visible to the right, the whole landscape supplying a background to the drowsy township, commended itself to her tired spirit, longing for rest. But if she had counted upon having reached the end of her wanderings, she was quickly undeceived. Not many days had passed before the Grand Duke's chamberlain arrived at Constance, charged with the expression of his master's extreme

regret that it was out of his power to invite the Queen to make her home within the boundary of his dominions. The decree of the allied Powers that members of the Imperial family could only be permitted to reside in Russia, Austria, or Prussia precluded him from offering hospitality to the cousin of the Beauharnais wife from whom he had already, though in vain, been urged to seek a divorce. His message was a fresh blow to the travellers ; and Stéphanie's affectionate letters could do little to temper Hortense's disappointment. It was, however, clear that she could not be compelled to leave until some other domicile had been arranged for her, and she was permitted to await in her present quarters the decision of the Swiss cantons with regard to her suggested transference to St. Gall.

When there had been more time to examine their surroundings, Constance did not appear to the travellers in so attractive a light as at first sight. Life in the single available inn was monotonous and dreary. The streets were covered with snow, French books were so scarce that it was with triumph that the Abbé Bertrand succeeded in unearthing a volume of *Anecdotes de la cour de Philippe Auguste*, no musical instrument could be procured, and the sole distraction to be had was afforded by the perusal of newspapers filled with intelligence little calculated to minister to the cheerfulness of the small party as they assembled in the solitary apartment serving alike as salon and dining-room. Now they were saddened by tidings of the execution of Marshal Ney, or again their joy at Lavallette's

escape from prison was moderated by the continued captivity of his wife, in whose clothes his evasion had been effected.

A paragraph in a Swiss journal stating that Hortense herself had spoken in slighting terms of the fallen Emperor, that she had asserted that he had lost his head and did not know what he said or did, roused her to indignation so hot that, in spite of the remonstrances of those around her, she insisted upon sending a contradiction to the paper.

"It is too much," she cried, as she read the report. "The wretches!—to put into my mouth an insult to the Emperor."

Broken by incidents of this nature, the melancholy December weeks passed away. Before the new year Hortense's immediate surroundings had been changed for the better, and she had established herself temporarily in a house commanding a view both of the Rhine and of the lake, where, with her personal possessions about her, she was in comparative luxury. But, at the best, in the tranquil monotony of the small, snow-bound provincial town, there must have been something of the quiet of the prison-house, following upon the ceaseless excitement of the preceding months.

Variety of a kind was afforded by the arrival of other refugees. In her new home Hortense was inevitably a species of rallying-point for those who had no longer any place in France; and the solitude of her retreat was likewise occasionally interrupted by guests, such as her mother's old friend the Princesse

de Hohenzollern, who were drawn thither by personal interest and loyal affection. On the whole, few events disturbed the routine of daily life.

“Whoever is acquainted with our manner of spending one day,” wrote Mademoiselle Cochelet to Prince Leopold, “knows how we pass weeks and months. Our *intérieur* is of the most modest kind. Our dear Prince, the Abbé, M. de Marmold—this is our society. Before dinner, at midday, we remain in our own rooms ; afterwards, if the weather permits, we go for a walk ; at four o’clock we separate, each seeking again his own apartment. I write, or remain with my friend. . . . At seven we sup ; later she makes a little music. . . . We read, and at ten o’clock we go to bed.”¹

In the spring a visitor more welcome than any other arrived in the person of Prince Eugène. Sheltered from anti-Bonapartist animosity by his connection with the Bavarian family, he was leading a peaceful existence, surrounded by his crowd of little children, in the territory of his father-in-law. It was characteristic of the generosity marking Hortense’s affection that she had never produced complications in the life thus assured to him by seeking to associate it with her own. But she gave him an eager welcome when he sought her at Constance. The presence of her brother was ever a renewal of life, and though he did not encourage her hopes that the suspicion with which she was regarded was in course of being dispelled—“do not deceive yourself,” he said ; “hatred and malice never

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. iv. pp. 125-6.

sleep"—with him at hand the enmity of others was robbed of its sting.

It is curious to picture the meeting of brother and sister. How much, between this spring and the Baden days of the previous year, had come and gone! How many hopes had been born only to die, and how much Hortense will have had to tell! There are questions that will always remain unanswered. Not to her most intimate confidants would the Queen have criticised her brother's conduct. Yet, whilst she told, as she must have told, the brilliant, tragic story of the Hundred Days, told how the Bonapartists had rallied round their chief, how Ney and Lavallette and Labédoyère and their comrades had risked life and honour in his cause, did no shadow of reproach, in her secret soul, attach to the brother she loved, to the adopted son of the Emperor, who owed to him everything he possessed, and who had yet been absent from his side in his hour of greatest need? Did she, again, repeat to him the words of the Emperor, on the night of his arrival at the Tuileries, "I count upon Eugène—I think he will come back;" or did she, more wisely, keep silence—a silence which, more than all, betrayed her conviction that his adopted father should not have counted upon him in vain?

Eugène himself probably had no doubt that he had done well. Upright and straightforward, but without imagination, greatness of character, or strong individuality, he will have felt no difficulty in believing those who had told him that, so far from



From a lithograph by Bodmer, after a picture by Richter.

EUGÈNE DE BEAUHARNAIS.

being called by honour or loyalty to risk everything for the sake of a cause foredoomed to failure, honour itself should deter him from such a course of action. When their arguments were endorsed by his wife, it is easy to imagine that he will have yielded to them with a clear conscience. Nor would Hortense be anxious, whatever might have been her views, to undeceive him.

During the days he passed at Constance his sister's future was discussed, and she showed him a site she desired to be permitted to purchase for building purposes. It was, however, in the possession of a member of the Grand Ducal family, and Stéphanie was compelled to write once more to explain that her cousin would not be allowed to become its owner, expressing at the same time her private hope that another property might be acquired by the Queen. It would, she added, be a great consolation to herself—"It seems to me that, knowing her to be there, I should find once again my family and my country."

It was in no way wished that the Grand Duchess should enjoy this consolation; and Hortense was further mystified by a polite communication from Metternich, to the effect that, hearing that she liked the shores of Constance, he hastened to send her a passport to Bregentz, in Austrian territory, where she would be treated by the authorities with the consideration due to her. A singular commentary was supplied on the unsolicited favour by an answer returned to the group of French refugees

gathered at Constance, who, having received orders to quit that neighbourhood, had applied for permission to settle in the very place suggested by the Minister as a fitting home for the Queen. In referring the petitioners to higher authorities, the local magnate added the information that in certain Austrian provinces alone would they be permitted to fix their abode, nor would they be, in his opinion, allowed to remain together. He further observed that they would not be given leave to follow the Duchesse de Saint-Leu ; nor would she herself be accorded a permanent residence at Bregentz. The inference drawn by Hortense from this ambiguous communication was that Metternich's desire had been to induce her to enter Austrian territory ; she would then be transferred by the Government to any locality they might select and would remain practically a prisoner in their hands. Under these circumstances, she felt no inclination to make use of the passport sent her by the Minister.

It was not long before Hortense returned the visit of her brother, in villegiatura in Bavaria. If he recognised the suspicion and hostility with which his sister was regarded, he was in no wise inclined to safeguard himself from any participation in her unpopularity that might be incurred through her presence in his home ; and the meeting was only shadowed by the death, shortly before her arrival, of his infant child. Five remained to him, all under eight years of age and, according to the Queen's companion, a veritable *nichée d'amours*.

"This one is yours," the Prince told Hortense, as he placed a little girl upon her knees. "She is astonishingly like what you were as a child ; and it is my great desire, dear Hortense, that she may resemble you in all respects."

Louis Napoleon had accompanied his mother, and, reserved, gentle, and inclined to be silent, had been at first intimidated by the crowd of strangers, ending by joining in his cousins' games as noisily as the rest.

The visit was a bright spot in the monochrome which Hortense's life was tending to become. Had it been possible, however, to forget the past and to enjoy an interlude untroubled by regrets, the presence of Lavallette, in hiding in the neighbourhood, would alone have acted as a reminder of the sufferings entailed upon almost every friend possessed by brother or sister by their loyalty to the Empire and recalled the wrecked lives and fortunes of those associated with them in happier days.

The remainder of the year was passed at Constance, with the exception of some weeks spent by the Queen at Geiss, whither she went to drink the waters, and where an element of comedy was introduced by the conversion of the respectable anti-Imperialist Landmann to her cause, and his suggestion that, divorce being easily obtained in Switzerland, the ex-Queen should become his wife. In August her brother set court etiquette at defiance by bringing his wife to visit her, unaccompanied by any attendants, in the character of a simple *bourgeoise*, and the possibility of the recurrence

of meetings of the kind must have helped Hortense to look on to the future with courage.

To that future the letter of her husband to which frequent reference has been made, bearing the date of the September of this year, may have lent a ray of hope. After a full and detailed recapitulation of the circumstances attending their marriage and of its deplorable sequel, he announced his intention of endeavouring to induce the Pope to annul the union, urging his wife to place no obstacles in the way of this solution. "I have explained to you my principal motives," he proceeded, "in order that you may know that I allege nothing that can be wounding to you. Could we obtain our liberty, we should, at last, cease to be so unhappy, and should be less at enmity than has ever been the case. Our children would not suffer. Born during marriage, they are strangers to all that has to do with causes and circumstances. I shall have for them the same care, the same sentiments that I have always had. Observe, I beg of you, that the effects of such an enfranchisement would be neither so scandalous nor so painful as our situation with regard to each other has always been and still is. On the contrary, the cognisance of the Holy See of the truth will cause all that animosity, calumny, and hostility have added to it to disappear in the eyes of the world and of history." The duty of both towards their children, Louis proceeded to point out, had been sufficiently performed ; and it was time that each should enjoy a legitimate independence. Relieved from a burden he found insupportable, he would feel a

lively interest in the sharer of a common misfortune ; and reiterating that in the facts he had brought forward nothing offensive was included, he entreated that she would return a favourable answer.¹

To Caroline Murat, upon whose influence and assistance he seems to have counted, he also wrote, reminding her of his past miseries ; reminding her, too, that she was not without responsibility for his marriage, and desiring her to reflect upon her great share in his misfortune.² All was in vain. No hindrance was indeed likely to have been placed by his wife in the way of a step securing freedom to her, as well as to him. But what Louis asked of the Pope was an impossibility ; and the fetters both found so galling remained no less firmly riveted than before.

¹ *L'Empire, les Bonaparte, et la cour* (Claretie), pp. 32-7.

² *Ibid.* p. 31.

CHAPTER XXIII

1816—1821

Hortense's position—Louis Napoleon—The Queen's unpublished memoirs—Desired to leave Constance—Buys Arenenberg—The ex-King and his sons—M. Lebas appointed tutor to Prince Louis.

THE failure of Louis to obtain his freedom proved to husband and wife that any hope they might have cherished of ultimate enfranchisement must be abandoned, and the recognition of the fact must have been bitter to Hortense. At thirty-two the events italicising most women's lives had been left behind her. From the vantage-ground of one who has little left to fear, Hortense could review her position, reckon up her many losses, take stock of what she retained. If the love of her brother gave some sweetness to her lot, she stood in need of it. Rarely can a woman who but yesterday had been surrounded by crowds of friends and courtiers have been more lonely. Most of those who regarded her with affection were at a distance; few persons of influence or authority could be relied upon to take thought for her interest and shield her from slander; her husband and her husband's family, who should have

been her natural allies, were at best no more than neutral ; her mother was dead ; her son had been taken from her ; and only little Louis remained, a source, though of joy, of anxiety as well.

Of Flahault there is no mention. Had Hortense, according to the conclusion of M. Masson, regarded her connection with him as permanent, it is to be inferred that her view of it had either never been shared by the young man, or that he had quickly wearied of a tie that could not be openly avowed and carried with it none of the comforts and advantages of domestic life. Not later than the year 1818, he apparently cut himself definitely adrift from his past by marrying an English wife.¹

Louis Napoleon remained, saved out of the wreck that had overtaken his mother's fortunes ; and upon him her affections were more and more to be concentrated. His brother was not forgotten, and it will be seen that, until his early death, the tie between mother and son continued, in spite of their separation, unbroken. But Louis was her daily companion, the object of her constant care, her one never-failing source of interest and pleasure during the grey years following upon her brilliant youth.

¹ M. de Flahault married Miss Elphinstone, afterwards Baroness Keith and Nairne. She was an heiress, the friend of Princess Charlotte and mother of the late Lady Lansdowne. The only mention of her made by Hortense—and it is a curious one—occurs in the volume of her memoirs relating to the events of the year 1831, when she says that, believing the Queen to be in Corfu, where Madame de Flahault had cousins in command, husband and wife had been solicitous in commending her to their care.

In order to gain a true conception of Hortense's future, the figure occupying, from childhood upwards, the most prominent place there must be included in it. Sketching Napoleon III., M. de la Guéronnière describes his boldness veiled by timidity, his resolution disguised by gentleness, his inflexibility redeemed by kindness; his shrewdness hidden by bonhomie; life beneath marble; fire below ashes.¹ George Sand, writing to the Prince, then a captive at Ham, said, "We are here, two or three of us, who often speak of you, and who always add, after protesting strongly against the danger of your achieving any position of power: 'He has the gift of making himself loved—it is impossible not to love him.'"

Allowing for some exaggeration, this faculty of winning affection may have been inherited from his mother; and it is one for which most others might be freely bartered. Another of Hortense's characteristics reproduced, as a child, in a son who has been declared to be her perfect reflection,² was compassion for human misery. Hortense was lavish in her gifts to the poor; and Louis followed in her steps. It was during the last winter spent at Constance that, having escaped from his attendant Abbé and, contrary to orders, strayed from the precincts of the house and garden, he returned in his shirt-sleeves and walking barefoot through mud and snow, having bestowed his coat and shoes upon some

¹ Quoted, *La Jeunesse de Napoléon III.* (Pol), p. 10.

² *Ibid.* p. 4.

wretched children encountered in the course of his stolen ramble.

A less admirable point of resemblance was the gentle obstinacy characteristic of mother and son, gaining for Louis, as it had gained for Hortense before him, the name of "le doux entêté." A quiet child, dreamy and timid, sympathetic and affectionate, and throughout his life devotedly attached to his mother, incongruous outbreaks of passion, as well as courage touched with bravado are to be found in the records of his boyhood. Hortense Lecroix, his foster-sister, has told how, when, as a child, he had been bragging of his great uncle and of what he too would do as a man, he had appeared to accept her ridicule without resentment; but soon after, inviting her pleasantly into the garden and seeking the shelter of a secluded alley, had seized her arm, threatening to break it did she not take back what she had said.¹ On another occasion, grown older and walking, with his cousins, Stéphanie's daughters, beside the river at Mannheim, the boy threw himself into the water to recover a flower dropped by the Princess Wasa.²

Such as he was, Hortense lavished upon him the affection for which she had fewer and fewer outlets. Her love was returned in fullest measure.

The relations of mother and son being thus close and intimate, it is fair to charge upon the Queen a portion of responsibility with regard to his

¹ *Memoirs of T. W. Evans*, vol. i. pp. 76-7.

² *Napoléon avant l'Empire* (H. Thirria), t. i. p. 6.

future. A man's generalisations are apt to be based upon personal experience, and in connection with the influence exercised by Hortense upon Napoleon III., the historian of his early years¹ is justified in quoting the Emperor's own views of the dominating power of past associations. "Slave to the memories of childhood," he wrote in the *Idées Napoléoniennes*, "man, without knowing it, obeys throughout his life the impressions received during his youth, and the influence and training to which he has been subjected." If this is true, it was no wonder that Louis Napoleon, bred up in the traditions of the Empire, attempted to materialise what, to his mother, had been—perhaps—a dream.

In practical matters Hortense's system of education may have been in some respects defective, in others mistaken; as her son has borne witness, her love did not render her blindly indulgent, and at Constance she was taking serious thought for his education, superintending the lessons he received from the Abbé Bertrand, and in default of other masters supplementing his teaching by her personal instructions. She was his mistress in drawing and dancing; and on each Saturday the child was required to repeat, in her presence, what he had learnt in the past week.

It was during the leisure of her enforced retreat that Hortense began to write the memoirs of which a few fragments² alone have as yet become public.

¹ *La Jeunesse de Napoléon III.* (S. Pol), p. 12.

² *La Reine Hortense en Italie, en France, et en Angleterre, pendant l'année 1831.*

Passing the earlier part of the day in her private apartments, "the need of replying to the falsehoods and the calumnies of the last two years" suggested to her the idea of putting their refutation into this form. "It was, for her, a matter of conscience to represent facts in their true colours—to offer a triumphant reply to the slanderous charges made against the Emperor. Motives that had been misunderstood, actions that had been placed by others in a false light, could not be better explained than by the person who, having always lived near him, was acquainted with his ideas and his character. . . . As to the calumnies of which she had been the object, she felt herself so much above such indignities that it sufficed her, in order to destroy them, to set forth the facts in all their truth, and to commit to paper the simple narrative of her actions. This done, she was relieved, and gave the matter no further thought." ¹

These records, not intended for publication during her lifetime, but destined at the time they were written, if her *lectrice* is to be believed, to serve as data to historians rendered impartial by the lapse of time, have not been permitted to answer that purpose. Ninety years have gone by since Hortense passed in review the events she had witnessed and in which she had taken her part, and the dead Queen's apology is still inaccessible to those who would wish to place her before the world in as true a light as, with the mist of a

¹ *Mémoires de Mademoiselle Cochelet*, t. iv. p. 248.

century between, is possible.¹ In the absence of the assistance that would have been afforded by her deliberate statements it is necessary to rely upon the testimony supplied by letters of her own, by contemporaries, and by her spoken and recorded words.

The Queen's enemies were busily at work, and in the winter of 1816-17 a fresh intimation reached her that she could not be permitted to remain at Constance. Letters from Stéphanie, accompanying the official communication her husband had been forced to make by superior powers, eagerly dissociated both herself and the Grand Duke in his private capacity from the action taken. Her husband, she said, was an object of suspicion by reason of his marriage and his attachment to his wife, and had no alternative but to yield to the pressure brought to bear upon him. "The Queen knows," she added, "that on all occasions, under all circumstances, all that depends upon us personally is at her service. . . . Her song is charming. . . . I cannot say how melancholy it is. I wept so much, so much. I think I shall never sing it to any one else. There are things that are like prayers—they must be said alone."

¹ The Queen's views in preparing her memoirs are quoted from Mademoiselle Cochelet, her companion at the time they were begun. In Mr. Blanchard Jerrold's *Life of Napoleon III.* (in which are included papers communicated by the Imperial family) the author states that these memoirs, "in obedience to her desire, are never to see the light of print." Assuming that this desire is here attributed to the Queen correctly, her intentions must have changed as her work proceeded. This hypothesis is confirmed by a mention, in the volume she published in 1833, of memoirs "qui ne sont pas destinés à voir le jour."

Thus wrote the fallen Emperor's former devotee, loyally faithful to Imperialist traditions and to family ties. Nevertheless, her affection left the practical situation untouched.

As to the question of a home, Hortense was not in the same position as when she had reached Constance. Her brother, now Duke of Leuchtenberg, was urging her to settle in Bavaria ; and when his desire was endorsed by his father-in-law, the King, and it was clear that injury would not thereby be suffered by the Prince's fortunes, she had no motive for refusing. Munich and the neighbourhood of the Court, however, offered little inducement to her to fix upon the capital as a place of residence ; and she finally selected Augsburg, as offering, amongst other advantages, that of a college where her son could pursue his education under her eye. Before leaving the neighbourhood of Constance she made a new and important purchase. The adjoining canton of Thurgau, democratic in its sympathies, had shown its independence of prejudice by inviting her to choose a home within its borders, and before she removed to Bavaria she had acquired the property of Arenenberg, not far from Constance, and situated on the southern shore of the lake, where a small house stood in a beautiful situation, looking over the water, and commanding a view of the island of Reichnau. On February 10, 1817, the estate and house passed into her hands ; and the Queen was never for the future without a settled dwelling-place.

It was in May that, this matter concluded and arrangements made for necessary repairs, Hortense and her household obeyed the orders that she should quit Constance, and proceeded to Augsburg.

The purchase of Arenenberg marks the inauguration of a new epoch in the Queen's life. She was no longer a homeless vagrant, driven hither and thither according to the will of enemies who hated and feared any representative of Imperial tradition. As the political situation became less strained and the Bonapartes were regarded with less alarm, the restrictions placed upon her liberty of action were gradually removed, and though an exile from France, she was not debarred from visiting the other countries of Europe. To Arenenberg she always returned as to the home of her predilection, and it was there that, twenty years later, she breathed her last. The storm had at length washed her on shore. At Augsburg she also bought a house, and there or at Arenenberg the following years found her, leading an existence unsignalised by any violent crises or startling events, and calling for less detailed description than the period by which they were preceded.

A jealous eye continued to be kept upon her movements, nor had it been without uneasiness that the acquisition of her new property had been regarded by lookers-on, ready to ascribe suspicious motives to her every action. Comte Auguste de Talleyrand wrote to express his disquiet to the French Minister of Police, and his fears that the solitary

situation of the château was well adapted to facilitate intrigue. With the local authorities on her side it was, nevertheless, manifestly difficult to interfere, and Hortense was soon happily engaged in a work which, more or less, lasted her lifetime—in rendering, that is, the house and grounds such as she would desire. “The ground is covered with snow, the cold come already,” she wrote eighteen years later from Arenenberg, “and I can do no more planting, which is a sorrow to me.”

Though the original buildings were small and inconvenient, the natural advantages of the situation appealed to the Queen’s love of nature. From a vine-clad hill a view was commanded of the lake, the lower Rhine, and the wooded slopes leading down to the water. Upon the surrounding grounds Hortense was to exercise her skill as a landscape gardener. A broad terrace was made overlooking the lake, plants were imported from Paris and Fontainebleau, stables were built, and by degrees the original château was replaced by one better fitted to supply the needs of the new proprietor. When, more than fifty years later, a traveller¹ made a pilgrimage to the place, those were still living there who could remember the days when the Queen and her son were first in possession of their home, and who loved to call to mind characteristic traits of the boy who had since occupied the throne of France. Little by little every room in the château grew to be rich in memorials

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold).

of the past—of the distant past connected with Joséphine and the great Emperor, as well as of more recent days: Bosio's statue of the Empress, a bust of Hortense, Prudhon's painting of Joséphine afterwards destroyed at Saint-Cloud, portraits of Arab chiefs sent home by Napoleon from Egypt, the picture, by Gros, of the crossing of the Alps, a set of Gobelins tapestries, probably those presented by the Emperor to Hortense, the rosewood bedroom furniture once belonging to Marie Antoinette—all these and numberless other relics, each telling its story, fell into their places around the Queen and her son, giving a familiar air to their foreign environment.

Nor is it difficult to believe that, with summers spent amongst her flowers and winters passed in Augsburg, her brother within reach, and Louis growing up at her side, Hortense was gradually becoming reconciled to her changed condition, and was not unhappy.

In 1819 the Comte de la Garde gives a glimpse of the Queen in her new surroundings. The fact that she had formerly set some of his verses to music supplied a link, and furnished an excuse to a stranger for turning aside on his way from Russia to France to visit her at Augsburg. There he found her with her two sons—the elder was on a visit to his mother at the time—their tutors, and the members of her household. And there the Count verified all he had been told of the fallen Queen, all the enthusiastic praises of the Russian officers who had been acquainted with her at Malmaison and

had made her countryman, as he listened, feel that he knew the woman of whom they spoke.

He was a guest likely to receive a special welcome from Hortense, and with the freemasonry existing between those of the same race and blood, meeting in a foreign land, she admitted him at once to a kind of intimacy, speaking of her brother, her children, her mother, her lost friend Madame de Broc, and, through all, allowing the wistfulness of the exile to be seen. When, after dinner, the Queen and her guest walked together in the garden, "I was able," he wrote, "in those few moments to convince myself of the truth of all that I had been told of her."

One characteristic noted by the Count, watching her as, later in the day, she received her chance visitors, should not be overlooked. "No one knew better than she," he observes, "how to listen." It was a faculty explaining, it may be, a part of her popularity.

At midnight he took leave. "Without perhaps a hope of seeing her again, I went, as from those desert flowers whose perfume the traveller breathes only once," carrying with him graven on his heart, wherever he might be led by destiny or time, the picture of a Queen who, as she told him in a subsequent letter, had changed the motto, *Mieux connue, mieux aimée*, formerly given her by her friends, for *Moins connue, moins troublée*, as more befitting her present state.¹

The attraction felt by M. de la Garde is no solitary

¹ *Album artistique de la Reine Hortense: Visite à Augsbourg du Comte de la Garde.*

instance of the species of glamour which continued, in the eyes of those brought into contact with her, to surround a Queen stripped of even the spurious royalty conferred upon her by the arbitrary will of an autocrat. It was as a woman that, in happier days, she had been loved, and in her fall she continued to draw hearts towards her, and after some subtle fashion fired and fixed the imagination. It seems necessary to dwell upon this ; since charm is to be felt, not to be described, and it is in its effect upon those brought under its influence, rather than by the words of a biographer, that its force can be measured and gauged.

Whilst Hortense's life was falling into a routine of peaceful monotony, one cause of uneasiness was liable at any moment to assume terrifying proportions. It was always possible that her husband might seek to enforce a claim to the custody of his younger son.

By the existing arrangement each parent retained the guardianship of one child, and meetings were interchanged. Louis had been taken by the Abbé Bertrand to visit the ex-King, and in 1819 Prince Napoleon had been permitted to spend some months with his mother. In spite of the concession, a letter written by his father at this time displays a spirit, the reverse of conciliatory ; he expresses the unfavourable impression produced upon him by the child for whose training Hortense was responsible, and animadverts with severity upon the condition of his elder son when first consigned to him at Rome. Whether the writer was

a fair judge of children, and of what is necessary to their well-being, may be doubted, more especially in view of letters to be quoted hereafter from the tutor to whose care Prince Napoleon was confided ; but it is evident that the King had found little to approve, and much to condemn, in both his sons. Napoleon, he complained, when delivered over to his keeping, at eleven, had shown small respect for what was most worthy of it, treating in especial priests as simpletons and as *canailles*. "You will do me the justice to admit that he is now more sensible, more thoughtful, and more religious. If I have not been able to root out faults contracted in his childhood, it is not with me that he has contracted them. The proof of it is that they were much more apparent on his arrival, and that Louis is far the most infected with them. . . . If I speak of my son's faults, it is neither in order to complain nor to reproach you, but because, since he is to pass several months with you, it was necessary to put you entirely in possession of the facts, and to indicate my wishes." In terms of greater harshness the father proceeds to remark upon the defects he had perceived in the son who had continued under his mother's care, to criticise the tone taken with Louis by the Abbé Bertrand, and to explain that it was because the boy was to return to his mother, and that any order he could have taken with him would have been useless and merely provisional, that he had refrained from the expression of his discontent. "To resume, madame," he concludes, "stay where you

wish. Consider yourself legally separated or not. But either bear my name as I bear it, or change it."¹

If the letter was not of a nature to afford pleasure to the recipient, one passage will have outweighed in importance, in Hortense's eyes, all the rest. "In a certain time Louis must also come to me," her husband had said, and the threat struck her in her most vulnerable point. Louis taken away, what would remain? It was a question scarcely to be avoided in view of the menace contained in her husband's missive.

Louis Bonaparte was right with regard to the unfitness of the old Abbé Bertrand, kindly, amiable, and light-hearted, to be sole conductor of the Prince's education, so far as it was carried on at home, and that Hortense agreed with him is shown by the fact that she was engaged in seeking a coadjutor to share his responsibility. Amongst the candidates for the post was M. Lebas, son of the Republican leader who had been the friend and comrade of Saint-Just, had shared his fall and that of Robespierre, and had escaped the guillotine by suicide. Not more than twenty-five, the young Philippe Lebas had had a varied career, had entered the navy, left it for the army, and had served with credit in the campaigns of 1813 and 1814. At the present moment, already married and a father, he was eking out narrow means accruing from some civil post by giving

¹ This last sentence, as will be seen hereafter, refers merely to Hortense's assumption of the rank of Duchess.

private lessons in Italian and mathematics, and in teaching the classics at Sainte-Barbe. Hortense had entered into communication, with a view to obtaining his services, with this young man, when all arrangements were arrested owing to a doubt whether she would be permitted to retain the custody of her son.

"Private circumstances," wrote the Baron Devaux, who had exerted himself on Lebas' behalf, "oblige Madame la Duchesse to suspend negotiations, owing to the uncertainty of her being able to keep her second son much longer."

The event proved that her fears had been happily needless. Louis did not enforce his threat, and not many months later she was sufficiently reassured as to feel justified in making a definite offer to Lebas of the post of tutor.¹ In June, 1820, the young man, with his wife, had quitted Paris, and by the middle of July he was writing to his stepfather from Arenenberg. Henceforth Louis Napoleon's education was to be carried on under the supervision of a master of a very different temper from that of the light-hearted Abbé.

The account given by M. Lebas of his pupil confirms Louis Bonaparte's opinion of the necessity of some change in the system hitherto pursued. Writing home in all confidence and candour, he confessed that he anticipated no little difficulty in the task before

¹ *La Jeunesse de Napoléon III* (S. Pol). To this book I am indebted for much useful information as to the period covered by M. Lebas' tutorship.

him. Though not without capacity, the Prince was scarcely more advanced in his acquirements than a child of seven ; on many subjects his ignorance was complete, and the only sentiment his teachers had been successful in inspiring was a loathing for study.

The situation was not without a touch of comedy : the scene laid at Arenenberg, bathed in summer sunshine ; Hortense employed in carrying out the improvements she was constantly making in house, garden, and grounds ; her household admiring and subservient ; the old Abbé Bertrand, flippant, gay, affectionate, courtly, and superficial, engaged in superintending, after a fashion, the studies of the twelve-year-old pupil he still called, as in nursery days, *Oui-oui* ; and—after the mistress of the house the central figure—Louis himself, not otherwise than docile, but with a pronounced objection to work, unused to any settled plan of life, and accustomed to regulate his hour of rising by the need of sleep felt by his instructor. Good-hearted and affectionate he was, with a pretty trick of courteous expression—“if you have no longer a son, I will replace him,” he told his tutor, when Lebas confided to him, with tears, the death of his baby—but idle, indolent, and totally devoid of the habit of application.

Upon this condition of affairs Lebas appeared, stern, conscientious, deeply impressed with the importance of his vocation, and in a few weeks all was changed. Hortense's method may have been defective, but it

says much for her determination to do the best she could for her son that she placed no obstacles in the way of the reformation instantly inaugurated by the young disciplinarian who was to revolutionise Louis' manner of life. Lebas had likewise the support of Eugène and Lavallette, both visitors at the château during his first weeks of authority; the Princesse de Hohenzollern, also a guest, signified her approval; and before long he was able to point with pride to the good effects of his system. During the winter at Augsburg the reins of government were held with a still firmer hand, the hours of the day were mapped out with military precision, and—subject of congratulation to Lebas beyond all else—communication with the salon was reduced to a minimum, an hour and a half before bedtime being the only portion of the day when Louis was permitted to make his appearance there. Even over this concession the tutor makes his lament. "I could not refuse it," he writes to a correspondent, "but you will agree with me that this hour is the most dangerous of the day—it is also the one demanding my strictest supervision. . . . Yet how to refuse a mother the pleasure of seeing her son for a single hour?"

In the spring of this year Louis made his first Communion, receiving on the occasion a letter from his father couched in affectionate terms. "I give you my blessing," wrote the ex-King, "with all my heart, . . . and renew on this solemn occasion the paternal benediction that I bestow upon you each morning, each

evening, and every time that my imagination turns towards you.”¹

When the summer came Lebas achieved a victory more signal than any preceding it. Having convinced Hortense that emulation was necessary in order to rouse the boy to exertion, he had already obtained her permission for his pupil to attend classes at the Augsburg college; and upon the Queen's departure she consented to leave Louis behind to complete the term, in the charge of M. and Madame Lebas.

¹ *Napoléon III. avant l'Empire* (H. Thirria), p. iii. M. Thirria includes this letter in the chain of evidence he has collected for the purpose of proving that Louis Bonaparte recognised the legitimacy of the future Emperor. It is clear that, if he had indulged any doubts on the subject, they were not sufficient to lead to any consistent repudiation of parentage.

CHAPTER XXIV

1821—1823

Death of the Emperor—Prince Napoleon and his tutor—Madame Campan at Baden—Life at Arenenberg—M. Coulmann—The Grande-Duchesse Stéphanie—King Louis at Marienbad—Letter to the Queen.

IT is possible that the Queen had been the less unwilling to dispense with her son's society owing to the fact that she was herself, by the advice of her doctors, to spend some weeks at Baden. But she was also wise enough to appreciate the advantages of the training and discipline enforced by M. Lebas; and writing to the young tutor on the eve of her departure from Arenenberg, M. Bertrand—owing his supplanter no grudge—reiterated the assurance of his mistress's satisfaction. If no letters were received from her own hand, the fact was to be ascribed solely to her disinclination for writing, and she was never weary of expressing her confidence in her son's *gouverneur*.

"Far from being enraged at her praises," added Louis' former preceptor, "the old Abbé says, '*Hé*, it is precisely thus.'"

At Baden a meeting of old friends was to take place,

and Madame Campan was to make one of the party. Few facts in Hortense's life are more illustrative of the steadfastness of her affections than her relations, through good and evil fortune, with her quondam schoolmistress. "I forget no one," the Queen had said, when suffering another species of exile in Holland, and her constancy in clinging to old ties proves that it was no mere idle phrase. Again and again in the lengthy letters addressed by Madame Campan to her former pupil the sympathy and kindness upon which it is evident that she felt able to reckon are reflected. Her troubles are poured out, her satisfactions confided, to Hortense, after a fashion impossible were not the writer confident of the attachment and interest of her correspondent. And now, for the first time since the Queen had quitted France, the two were to meet. In the winter of 1821 misfortune had overtaken the old woman. Her only son had died, and the letter addressed to the Queen in the first freshness of her grief is another proof of the place she occupied in Madame Campan's heart.

"I still live," she wrote, "and have lost him for whom I lived. I ceased to be a mother on the 26th of this month. . . . One of the comforting thoughts mingling with my great sorrow is that of going, in a year, to pass the summer near you at Constance."¹

The visit took place sooner than was expected, and in June Madame Campan was writing that she would join the Queen at Baden, and return with her to

¹ *Correspondance de Madame Campan*, t. ii.

Arenenberg—would see again the dear pupil of Saint-Germain whom she would have cherished all her life, with perhaps more demonstration of tenderness, had not earthly greatness come to embellish and trouble her days.¹

Hortense was to be saddened at Baden by the news that Napoleon's life had ended in his dreary place of exile. A fortnight after the Abbé's letter, filled with not ungraceful persiflage, had been dispatched by the blithe old ecclesiastic to his ponderous young successor, it became his duty to send to Augsburg the melancholy tidings, directing Lebas to break the news to the boy to whom his uncle was ever made an object of veneration and love. "Children, happily," the Abbé wrote, "shake off melancholy thoughts quickly. It is not the same here. Madame weeps bitterly for him who was to her as a father, and who leaves, as his nephew's heritage, a name henceforth immortal."

The Queen herself gave expression to her feelings to Eugène. "The more one reflects," she wrote, "the more one says to oneself that it is too much happiness for the person who suffered and who no longer exists. But it is painful to think that he to whom one owes all, who had been a father to us, is dead in affliction, and far from those he loved—his wife and his son. Everything had been taken from him, and the great man, so often accused of inhumanity, had treated none so inexorably as he has himself been treated. By what they write to me, Louis has wept

¹ *Correspondance de Madame Campan*, t. ii.

much for his uncle. He had struck these children's imagination, and it will be they who will feel the loss they have just had most sharply. You would not believe how much I regret that my letter had not reached him."¹

Louis' letter to his mother, if some portion of it suggests the tutor's supervision, contains passages characteristic of the spirit instilled by the Queen. His uncle, the boy observed,² was in a better world, where he would be in peaceful enjoyment of his good deeds. What grieved his nephew was that he had never once seen him, "for at Paris I was so young that it is hardly more than my heart that remembers it. If I do ill, thinking of that great man, I seem to hear his spirit telling me to render myself worthy of the name of Napoleon. . . . Happily I am young," he confesses naïvely, "and I often seem to have forgotten this misfortune. But if my natural gaiety sometimes returns, it does not prevent my heart from being sorrowful, nor the eternal hatred I feel for the English."

The Emperor's death revived all the sadness of the past for the Queen; and her faithful friend Bertrand continued to note her many tears and changed aspect. A crowd of memories must have been evoked by the thought of the hero of her childhood, the affectionate friend and father of later years, dying alone, far from wife and child. Yet, the first shock of grief

¹ *L'Empire, les Bonaparte et la cour* (Claretie), p. 120.

² *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 100.

over, she could allow, as in her letter to Prince Eugène, that it might be better so. "She had long awaited the blow that has now fallen upon her," said the Abbé, "and in the end she confesses that it is happiest for him whose fetters could not be broken."

That she had been remembered by her stepfather in his place of exile was proved by the bequest of a Turkish carpet.

Whilst watching, according to her lights, over the son who had been left to her, Hortense's thoughts must constantly have turned to her elder child, under the guardianship of the gloomy invalid at Rome. In the reports reaching Arenenberg of King Louis' manner of life there can have been little to reassure her as to the welfare and happiness of her boy. As early as 1814 it was said of her husband that, abandoning the joys of the world—joys of which poor Louis had had but scanty experience—he had thrown himself into devotion.¹ Literature, it was true, still continued to be a resource ; and according to the same authority, "between two religious exercises, he gave himself up to poetry and composed verses," publishing in 1819 a work on versification dedicated to the Academy.² But if it was well that the ex-King should have found in religion and literature a refuge from the practical ills and disappointments of life, neither his habits nor his temperament rendered him a fitting companion for a spirited boy just emerging from child-

¹ *Mémoires de Lucien Bonaparte* (Iung), t. iii. p. 214.

² *Ibid.* t. iii. pp. 382, 392.

hood. A glance at the *Réglement pour mon fils*, bearing the date November, 1817, shows the minuteness with which the Prince's days were ordered. Each hour was to be disposed of according to rule ; and not only are more serious matters dealt with, but the shoes the boy is to wear, the method to be used in cleaning his nails—with lemon, not soap—the dry sponge to be applied to his head instead of water, the means to be taken to remove stains from his clothes, are all carefully prescribed. Sundays and Thursdays were to be observed as *fête* days, and on the last a weekly letter was to be written to the Queen.¹

Such was the system of close supervision instituted by the King when his son was a child ; and letters from the tutor, M. Vieillard, to whose care Napoleon was entrusted in 1821, at the age of fifteen, give a vivid description of the scheme of education pursued by his father, with its results, and supply a melancholy justification of Hortense's reluctance to part with her son.

The teacher had been, strangely enough, selected by the Queen, and the arrangements for his engagement were of her making. To Lebas, as his colleague, he sent a full account, no doubt intended for her eyes, of the difficulties he encountered in Rome ; his complaints with regard to his pupil being much of the same nature as the lamentations of Lebas himself when he had first entered upon his own post.

Possessing good natural gifts and a certain attraction,

¹ *L'Empire, les Bonaparte et la cour* (Claretie), pp. 46-7.



PRINCE NAPOLEON LOUIS.

From a picture at Versailles. Photo by Neurdin Frères.

Prince Napoleon was backward in learning and no less indisposed to study or application than his brother had been. Lebas, as Vieillard pointed out, had enjoyed the advantage of the Queen's cordial support. With King Louis it was a different matter ; all was uncertainty, indecision, and change. A plan was approved one day to be abandoned the next, and the preceptor was reduced to the necessity of looking on at studies conducted without system or order, work unattended by success, labour without reward. "Irresolution is the deity of the place." It was not impossible, he added ironically, that by the time the boy was to be married a scheme of education might have been decided upon.

The tutor was not altogether the person to command unlimited confidence from a man of Louis' views and temper. On the day after his arrival the ex-King had inquired whether he was a good Catholic ; and upon Vieillard replying frankly in the negative, "Are you then a Turk?" he demanded curtly. Reassured upon this point, he said no more, but the divergence of opinion was not unlikely to render Louis suspicious as to the reforms that the tutor would have introduced. Although assured by the King that he set his religious convictions on one side, Vieillard foresaw difficulties, increased by the fact that the lad, believed by his father to be "*parfaitement religieux*," was, in truth, in revolt against a system unwisely forced upon him. "Not only has the Prince no religion," stated the *gouverneur*, "but

he hates both religion and its ministers almost as much as the slave hates his fetters and his tyrants. To such a degree has he been wearied, beset, and annoyed, that a violent reaction has been produced in his mind towards the objects presented to him with so misplaced an obstinacy. He submits, nevertheless, to his father's will, sighing with all his heart after the happy moment when he will listen to his own alone." It was no wonder if the man entrusted with this pupil—for whom he had, moreover, a genuine liking—was moved to despair.¹

The Queen's advice to her nominee under his difficult circumstances was marked by prudence and discretion. She counselled him, through Lebas, to relinquish the idea of beginning the education of a boy of fifteen on a totally fresh basis ; to seek to make the most of his opportunities in teaching him what it was indispensable that he should know ; to follow the directions he received from the King, even if they should change daily ; and, above all, to avoid argument or discussion. Through Lebas also she undertook to double the niggardly stipend Vieillard was to receive from her husband, and he was reassured as to his fears that she might afterwards attribute to his influence the unsatisfactory attitude of her son towards spiritual matters, since she declared she was well aware of the present condition of his mind.²

Upon anxieties and preoccupations of this nature

¹ *La Jeunesse de Napoléon III.* (S. Pol), pp. 15-19.

² *Ibid.* p. 23.

the news of the Emperor's death had come, throwing its shadow over the party at Baden. By the time that the return to Arenenberg was made, the Abbé, at least, had recovered his natural good spirits. Madame Campan still remained her former pupil's guest, and writing to lay in a fresh supply of snuff, the old man mentioned that he had provided sufficient for his personal use, but that, Madame Campan not having been equally foresighted, he had undertaken "the nourishment of her nose." Madame Voisin, once housekeeper at the Imperial educational establishment at Écouen, had accompanied her late principal on her visit to the Queen, and must have been a welcome guest at Arenenberg, in virtue—if for no other reason—of her culinary gifts. She possessed to a supreme degree—so M. Lebas told his mother with enthusiasm—the art of making preserves, liqueurs, and *cornichons*; and was—a less important matter—an excellent lady, with the perfection of a character.

Hortense had doubtless been glad to return to Arenenberg. More and more it was assuming to her the character of a settled home. She was on good terms with her neighbours. Mademoiselle Cochelet had made the purchase of a small property close at hand, where she lived with her mother; and, above all, Eugène had caused a house to be built—Eugenberg—near his sister's château, whither he could always repair when opportunity offered.

During the autumn of 1821 the Grand Duchess Stéphanie's first visit to Arenenberg was paid. The

least nervous of all the Queen's kin as to the danger of being compromised by intercourse with a woman who was the constant object of suspicion and calumny, she had refused to be deterred by any considerations of the kind from association with her cousin, and had settled the matter with characteristic determination.

"When I am thinking of doing a thing," she explained, "I ask myself whether it is well to do it. If it appears that it is, I leave the rest alone. Why make a sacrifice that no one is grateful to you for? For the rest, I am candid about it. I spoke of my journey to M. de Lagarde"—the French Minister at Carlsruhe—"as the most natural thing in the world, and that puts me at my ease with him."¹

To the Queen the presence of her gay and loyal cousin will have afforded a welcome variety. The Grand Duchess had a charm which took all hearts by storm. Whilst, in her fifteen years of marriage, she had mastered the language of her adopted country, she retained her French modes of expression, and would pass in rapid transition from the practice of her acquired dignity and from the observance of court etiquette to the older habits of her girlhood, narrating with laughter the difficulties into which she had thus been brought. With a special gift as a *raconteuse*, she would tell how, taking an early country ramble, her hair uncurled and wet with dew, her clothes muddy and torn by the thickets, her veil in rags, she had been met by a procession headed by the clergy of Fribourg, who had

¹ *Réminiscences* (Coulmann), t. ii, p. 21.

insisted, *bon gré, mal gré*, on putting her in a place of honour and conducting her in state to assist at High Mass in the Cathedral. On another occasion she related that when the citizens, from excess of loyalty, were insisting, in spite of her remonstrances, in taking her horses out of the carriage and dragging it themselves, she protested in vain, threatening that, did they persist in their intention, she would leave the carriage. Her Highness, observed the Grand Marshal grimly, had better not do so. He had known a German Prince who had acted in the same way under similar circumstances, with the result that he had been lifted on to the shoulders of his subjects and borne in triumph.

A guest of Mademoiselle Cochelet's, M. Coulmann, brought by his hostess to dine at Arenenberg, has given a pleasant picture of the two cousins. Young and enthusiastic, "the courtier of the fallen and bowing before the authority of tears," the Queen and her surroundings produced a deep impression upon the visitor. How could it, he asked, be otherwise? "If the greatness which has been the object of the insults of fate is that of a woman, if that woman, severe towards herself, indulgent towards others, without hatred, without envy, adds to her gifts the free cultivation of thought, respect for what is beautiful, a taste for art and science, the ennobling of all forms of life—if she is kin to a great man, as much by intellect and mind as by ties of blood, how is one to be proof against her attraction?"

So spoke Coulmann of the Queen, stripped of the

factitious glamour of her former position. His estimate may have owed something to the cordiality of her reception. It was no merit on her part, she wrote to him later, to welcome a countryman ; the language of her native land was the language of her heart. "If I had France," she told her guest, "I should want nothing more." Her regrets, she added, were those of a Frenchwoman, and not of a French Princess. It was only now that she was beginning to gain self-knowledge. Hitherto her life had been spent in a tumult. "I knew I was meant to do good, but I did it without thought. At each of the Emperor's campaigns I said, 'There will be many unhappy ones to be comforted.' Since then I have begun to reason. I have read much ; I have studied history ; I arrive at my own judgments ; I form my opinions upon men and things, and I find it very interesting."¹ "My persecutors have given me the 'sentiment de moi-même,' " she said another time, "and have inspired me with a sort of pride. They have made a power of me, . . . have imagined that it was I who brought back the Emperor. That my children may see France once more is my only personal desire."

There is no reason to question the Queen's sincerity. Nevertheless, an anecdote related by the same authority, half-playful, yet not without undertone of earnest, would seem to indicate that, to Hortense at Arenenberg as to her mother at Navarre, the time may have seemed "a little long."

¹ *Réminiscences* (Coulmann), t. ii. p. 15.

"It is not to know the hour better that I have two clocks," she said, as, not being in accord, they struck in succession, "but it seems to me that time goes faster when I hear the hour strike more frequently."¹

The party at Arenenberg, when Coulmann visited it, consisted, besides the Grand Duchess, of her lady-in-waiting, belonging so strictly to the old nobility that she could scarcely refrain from alluding to the Emperor as Bonaparte, Hortense's two *dames de compagnie*, Mademoiselle Courtin and Mademoiselle de Mollenbach, M. Lebas, "the severe guardian of revolutionary tradition," and the two Princes, Napoleon being once more on a visit to his mother. The pride taken by her elder son in the Queen, as he inspected her drawings or listened to her singing in a voice still sweet, was specially noted by the guest.

Thus, in her lake-side home, Hortense's existence was settling into quiet routine. She had learnt the art—lacking to her in youth—of compromise ; and if at times her eyes continued to turn wistfully to her native land, she was not blind to the compensations of exile.

"I am the opposite of Lord Byron," she once told a friend expressing a desire to see her readmitted to France, "who in the matter of sentiment took love and hate alone into account. I fear both one and the other. After so many sorrows, tranquillity is the

¹ *Réminiscences* (Coulmann), t. ii. p. 35.

only good to which I aspire. I hope to find it in myself as well as in the place I live in.”¹

It is probable that moods of resignation alternated with others, and that the old friends by whom she was visited in her retreat may have brought with them a disturbing flavour of earlier days, with their keener joys and more crushing sorrows, their dead hopes and fears and excitements. Her former playmate, Marshal Ney’s sorrowful widow, was her guest; others, as the years slipped by, to whom either past or present must have worn the semblance of a dream, flitted like ghosts across the stage.

But Hortense was beyond all else a mother, and her interests centred round her sons. The lads were growing up, and the thought of the future awaiting them, plans and speculations concerning the destiny of the representatives of a great tradition, must have gradually encroached upon the predominance of the past.

Nor was the present without its pleasures. So long as Eugène lived, loving and true, one link with the past continued unbroken; and in the stillness of her Swiss home she was turning once more to the pursuits she had always loved: was composing music—sometimes submitted to Buchon for correction—was drawing and painting, maintaining a connection with her old master, Isabey, and was busy amongst her flowers.

A journey to Italy was from time to time projected,

¹ *Réminiscences* (Coulmann), t. ii. p. 53.

but it was not till the autumn of 1823 that the plan was carried into execution. In the spring of that year the tenour of the Queen's life had been painfully interrupted, and the great blow destined to fall upon her a year later had cast its shadow before. Eugène was thought to be dying, and for sixteen days his wife and sister watched almost uninterruptedly by his side. The dreaded calamity was, for the time, averted. The Prince appeared to have made a complete recovery, and Hortense stayed at Munich to celebrate the marriage of his eldest daughter to the Prince Royal of Sweden. The reaction of relief and joy was great. "I had," she wrote afterwards, "a lively sense of the happiness remaining to me. All other misfortunes had disappeared. I had thought to lose my brother, my friend, my support, and I kept him. He was given back to me."

Though it was to be no more than a respite, for the present all seemed well. During the summer Hortense had again the pleasure of receiving at Arenenberg Prince Napoleon, permitted by his father to visit it under the care of his tutor, Colonel Armandi, no better pleased with his post, to judge by his letters, than his predecessor, Vieillard. What was less satisfactory than the meeting with her elder son was the demand made by the ex-King, then taking the waters at Marienbad, that Prince Louis should in exchange be sent to keep him company at the health-resort. It was impossible to refuse the request; but in the eyes of M. Lebas—a teacher by nature and

temperament almost to the same degree as Madame Campan—the interruption involved to his pupil's studies was a grave misfortune. Moreover, as might perhaps be expected in a dependant of the Queen's, he viewed the King with marked disfavour, finding constant cause for irritation in Louis Bonaparte's want of decision, his continual changes of plan, his hesitation, and the absence on his part of any steadfastness of purpose. "I should never have imagined," wrote the tutor, "that the spirit of contradiction and variability could be carried so far."

To the scholar, no doubt, the interlude of idleness deplored by Lebas was less distasteful, and a letter to his mother, though full of affection for her, displays none of the impatience to conclude his visit shown by the tutor. It also gives evidence of the liking for his father always noticeable in the Prince's subsequent allusions to him.

"I shall be very glad to see you again," wrote the boy, "but shall also be very sorry to leave *papa*, who is not very well. He has been much grieved by the Pope's death. We should be very glad of news of you, for we had been without it for a week, and a week seems to me a month when I have no letters from my dear *maman*."¹

The position of the boys must have been a difficult one, objects of affection and solicitude as they were to each of their separated parents. A weekly letter to his mother was, however, amongst the duties

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i, p. 120.

imposed by the King upon his elder son; and a sharp admonition addressed to his brother Lucien at a somewhat earlier date is a curious proof that Louis could at times constitute himself the Queen's defender, and felt for her a certain respect.

"You have attacked my wife," he told his brother, writing to him on the occasion of the marriage of Lucien's daughter, disapproved by the King—"you have attacked my wife, to whom you nevertheless write *en bon frère*. . . . What is there in common, I beg, between my wife's conduct and your daughter's marriage? Understand that, in spite of all that is said of Hortense, I would rather be her husband, separated from her, than the tolerant husband of many other women."¹

Whilst resenting the aspersions cast upon her by others, his communications with the Queen were not of a friendly nature. A letter written to her from Marienbad points to what was an additional source of friction, and is chiefly important as explaining the concluding words in the document quoted in the preceding chapter, when he bade her bear his name as he bore it or else to change it. The passage has been cited as reflecting upon Hortense's conduct and manner of life; it appears more likely that it referred merely to the title of Duchess by which she was known. Whether conferred upon her by letters patent, as Mademoiselle Cochelet asserts, or whether she had been merely informally authorised by

¹ *L'Empire, les Bonaparte et la cour* (J. Claretie), p. 51.

Louis XVIII. to assume the title, as M. Thirria believes, that her rank was superior to his own, as Comte de Saint-Leu, seems to have been a constant cause of offence to Louis, and during his visit to Marienbad he gave free vent to his annoyance.

"I reproach you," he wrote, "with continuing to take a different title to that of your husband. . . . You must be consistent, and if you believe yourself in conscience to be separated from your husband, take another name, or bear his as he bears it"—that is, with the lower rank of Comtesse.¹

Hortense, fallen from the position of Queen, may not have attached to the question the importance given it by Louis; she showed no inclination to adopt the conciliatory policy implied by the concession he demanded, and all went on as before.

Lebas was continuing to chafe against his enforced residence at Marienbad; and even when he had effected his escape, with his pupil, from the watering-place, no softening is perceptible in the judgment he pronounced upon his late host. The month he had passed in Bohemia, he wrote to his wife, had been one of the most disagreeable he had ever spent. The King's nature was more subject to mutability than any he had met with—nothing in him was stable save his instability. If, to this, Madame Lebas would add a great mistrust of other men, a tendency to see in those around him fools and

¹ *Viennese Archives*. Quoted, *La Marquise de Crenay* (H. Thirria), p. 10.

rogues, she would form a very faint conception of the King's character. Forecasting the consequences should Louis carry out his threat of taking over the personal care of his younger son, the tutor declared that he would feel it an impossibility to live with him.

Poor Lebas was out of humour with the world in general. The Queen's reception on his return had not answered to his expectations. After a month so unpleasantly wasted in her service, it might have been expected that she would have wished for a conversation with the victim. Not only had she testified no such desire, but had scarcely appeared aware of his presence, and Lebas indulged in generalities eminently disadvantageous to the great ones of the earth.

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CHAPTER XXV

1823—1830

Rome—Madame Récamier—Madame Salvage—Prince Eugène's illness and death—Prince Napoleon and his tutor—The Grand Duchess again at Arenenberg—Death of the King of Bavaria—Winters at Rome—The Revolution of 1830.

ALTHOUGH Prince Louis had been rescued from the distractions of Marienbad, the year was to prove unfortunate so far as educational purposes were concerned. It had been settled that the Queen should take her elder son in the autumn to rejoin his father at Rome ; and by the end of October the whole party, including the two lads and their respective *gouverneurs*, had left Augsburg *en route* for Italy. Reaching Bologna by November 5, a stay of some weeks was made there ; but by the middle of the following month Hortense was established in her winter quarters at Rome, Prince Napoleon returning to his father's house, and Louis, to every one's relief, being permitted to remain with his mother. Between husband and wife it does not appear that any personal intercourse was kept up, but the boys divided their time between their parents, and formed in some sort a connecting link.

The novelty of the life to which Prince Louis was introduced was not conducive to scholastic diligence, and Lebas is again found deploring the impossibility of conducting studies with regularity.

"He goes to bed late," groaned the tutor, "rises late ; works little and lazily until luncheon ; rides at midday ; comes in tired at three o'clock ; yawns at my lessons until five ; and goes to pass the rest of the day with his father. You may imagine how I shudder at the future thus prepared for him ! "

Lebas, staunch Republican as he was, would have regarded with still greater horror the future in truth awaiting his pupil, had the veil been withdrawn from it. His discontent was probably shared by neither the Queen nor her household, once more, after the lapse of years, in the midst of congenial society. Life in the cosmopolitan centre must have presented a pleasant contrast to the provincial gaieties of an Augsburg winter. Most of the Bonapartes had drifted to Rome, hospitably received there by Pope Pius VII., and Hortense appears to have forgotten old grudges and to have been on good terms with her husband's kinsfolk, a common regret, and perhaps a common hope, uniting the members of the Imperial family.

Round the aged *Madame Mère* her descendants gathered as to a natural centre, the old woman, in perpetual mourning for her past, "binding together once again the scattered faggot." In her silent, sombre dwelling, with unopened windows, served by a

few old attendants arrayed in black and as remote as herself from the life and movement of the city, Madame Letitia lived, admitting no strangers to her house, never varying her uniform dress of black merino, and only crossing her threshold once daily, to take a drive into the country. But each afternoon, between four and six, her room was filled with visitors of her race and blood—her brother, Cardinal Fesch, her sons, her daughters, her daughters-in-law, and their children, all assembled around her, passing out of the Roman streets into a place apart, shadowed, still, and melancholy, darkened with a mystery of grief both attractive and intimidating to the children who were brought thither. In her old age as in earlier years, *Madame Mère* maintained her ascendancy over her sons and daughters, even Lucien, a rebel by nature and habit, succumbing in the end to her authority.¹

In sharp contrast to the hours spent by Hortense in this atmosphere of seclusion and gloom was the life carried on in her own salon, where notable foreigners, the eminent Liberals of France and of Europe, mixed with representatives of literature and art. Yet, whilst her sister-in-law Pauline incurred her mother's reproaches by her relaxation of the austerity of mourning observed by others of the family, it is allowed by Jérôme's Bonapartist biographer that Hortense knew how to satisfy her personal tastes, "d'une manière pleine de convenance et de tact,"²

¹ *Mémoires du Roi Jérôme*, t. vii. p. 418 seq.

² *Ibid.*



From a picture by F. Gérard. Photo by Neurdin Frères.

MARIE LÆTITIA RAMOLINO BONAPARTE.

and apparently avoided giving offence to her mother-in-law.

Amongst other acquaintanceships revived by the Queen at this time, and perhaps the most valued of them all, was that of Madame Récamier. For this lady she had always displayed a genuine and cordial liking; and when the paths of the two had last crossed, during the episode of the Hundred Days, it will be remembered that Hortense had hastened to assure her of her protection, should it prove necessary. At present their positions were in a measure reversed, Hortense being a member of a family fallen and discredited, and her old acquaintance, the chosen associate and friend of Chateaubriand, of the Duc de Laval-Montmorency, French Ambassador at Rome, and of others belonging to the dominant party. Madame Récamier has left an account of the first meeting of the two under their changed circumstances.

"I had gone to St. Peter's one feast-day," she writes, "to listen to the sacred music, so beautiful when heard under the vaulted roof of that immense building. There, leaning against a pillar, my veil covering my face, I followed, in spirit and thought, the solemn notes lost in the depths of the dome. A woman with a graceful figure, veiled like myself, came to stand near the same pillar; each time that a more lively emotion caused me to make an involuntary movement, my eyes met the face of the stranger turned towards me. She appeared to be seeking to recognise my features; for my part, through the obstacle inter-

posed by our veils, I thought I discerned blue eyes and fair hair not unknown to me. 'Madame Récamier' —'It is you, madame!' we said almost simultaneously. 'How glad I am to meet you again!' continued Queen Hortense, for it was she. 'You know I have not waited till now to try to approach you; but you always kept me at a distance,' she said with a smile.

"'At that time, madame,' I answered, 'my friends were in exile and unhappy. You were happy and brilliant. My place was not at your side.'

"'If misfortune has the privilege of attracting you,' returned the Queen, 'you will admit that my turn is come, and will allow me to claim my rights.'"

Madame Récamier personally would have been nothing loath. But there would have been obvious inconveniences in receiving a Bonaparte at a house where the French Ambassador and the Royalists in Rome were habitual guests; and to visit Hortense would have been a compromising matter. The Queen was quick to perceive a lack of response upon Madame Récamier's part and to place a correct interpretation upon it. The drawbacks of greatness, she observed, adhered to those who had forfeited its privileges and still presented hindrances to a woman's friendship.

Before the interview ended a way had been found out of the difficulty. If ordinary intercourse—the exchange of formal visits—was forbidden by the circumstances, were there not other means of meeting, ruins to be inspected, sights to be seen? Why should not

each, "par hasard," turn her steps daily in a given direction, and thus outwit convention and political etiquette? The arrangement was soon made, the Queen and her friend entering into the scheme with the greater zest owing to the suspicion of mystery attaching to it, and in a spirit justifying to some extent the charge of an undue prolongation of youth ; nor was it until a hint had been given by Madame Récamier that the Duc de Montmorency, who had served as her escort to St. Peter's, would be returning thither to resume his charge that the conversation was concluded."¹

The chance encounter was the beginning of what must have been a pleasant chapter in the lives of both of those concerned. For Hortense, the companionship of a woman noted for her intellectual gifts was full of interest and charm ; and Madame Récamier, at a time when Chateaubriand was wavering in his allegiance, will have welcomed any offered distraction. On the very next day a meeting took place at the Coliseum, of which Madame Récamier has again given a description :

"We sat on the steps of the cross in the middle of the amphitheatre. Prince Charles Napoleon [*sic*] and M. Ampère"—poor Ampère ! who, young enough to be her son, cherished so passionate a devotion to the writer—"who had followed us, walked about at some distance. Night was come—an Italian night ; the moon was mounting gently in the sky ; behind the open arcades of the Coliseum the evening breeze

¹ *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii. pp. 72-5.

sounded in the deserted galleries. Near me was this woman, herself the living ruin of so astonishing a fortune. Emotion, confused and indefinable, held me silent. The Queen also appeared absorbed in thought.

“‘How many events have been necessary,’ she said at length, turning towards me, ‘to bring us together here—events of which I have been the plaything and the victim, having neither foreseen nor invited them?’”

Of those events Hortense had much to say. She had been misunderstood—misjudged; and though she may have learnt to disregard the opinion of the world, she was anxious to set matters in their true light in the eyes of a woman whose opinion she valued. With most of the Royalist party, Madame Récamier had believed her to have been, in a measure, responsible for the return from Elba. Hortense steadily denied any complicity in the Emperor’s action, and on this point she was successful in proving her innocence to her friend’s satisfaction.¹ In her intercourse with an adherent of views opposite to her own, she moreover displayed the skill of a trained good breeding which precluded friction, bringing, says Madame Récamier, “so *coquette* a grace into our relationship, treating the opinions she knew to be mine with so much delicacy and care, that I could not help saying at the time in speaking of her—what has since been repeated—that the only defect I recognised in her was to be not sufficiently Bonapartist.”²

¹ *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii. p. 80.

² *Ibid.* p. 82.

Had Hortense been guilty of no other fault, she would have been singularly blameless ; but her regrets for the past, her political interests in the present, and—possibly—her hopes for the future, were not likely to have been poured into the ear of the friend of Chateaubriand and the Duc de Montmorency. She was sufficiently a woman of the world to be capable of a true and genuine liking for a companion out of sympathy with her standpoint ; nor is the fact of her seeking Madame Récamier's society necessarily inconsistent with the accounts of her Roman salon, described—in this or later years—as “ the centre of Bonapartism—not of that Bonapartism which wept tears of blood over the misfortunes of the cause and dreamt of vengeance ; but of a Bonapartism rather confident in the future than clouded by regrets for the past.”¹

An incident finding a place in Madame Récamier's memoirs does not indicate such an ignorance on the part of the Queen's friend of her attitude towards the Imperialist party as to justify the accusation which has been made of insincerity or double-dealing. At a masked ball given by the Prince Torlonia it had been determined that the two should wear similar white dominos, the only mark distinguishing them being a bouquet of roses carried by the one, a wreath worn by the other. At a given moment wreath and bouquet were dexterously exchanged, the Queen replaced Madame Récamier on the arm of the Ambassador of Louis XVIII., Jérôme Bonaparte being

¹ *Mémoires du Roi Jérôme.*

made all unconsciously to serve as escort to his sister-in-law's Royalist double. If Madame Récamier is to be credited, she was thus introduced to a circle where Bonapartist hopes and regrets were freely discussed, Hortense receiving, in her stead, the homage of the diplomatic body, until rumours of the mystification reached their fellow-guests, causing each to be treated with suspicion so long as her identity had not been placed beyond doubt. "Everyone, for the rest," adds the narrator, "lent themselves to [the pleasantries] with a good grace, excepting the Princesse de Lieven, who could never forsake politics, even at a ball, and who strongly disapproved of having been compromised with a *Bonaparte*."¹

It was probably this year that Hortense made the acquaintance of a friend upon whom she grew to depend in her later years and who was her nurse during her last illness. This was Madame Salvage, daughter of the French Consul at Civita Vecchia. Separated from her husband, and childless, she was one of the lonely women in special need of an object upon which to lavish their devotion. Her gifts, including cleverness, culture, and generosity, did not include that personal charm worth all the rest. Attaching herself in the first place to Madame Récamier, by whom she was presented to the Queen, she had been disappointed both in the amount of response elicited from a woman who had all the world at her feet, and in the place accorded to the newcomer in the circle of her associates. She there-

¹ *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii. pp. 80-2.

fore transferred in a measure her allegiance to Hortense, accommodating her views to the circumstances and, from a Royalist, becoming an adherent of the Bonaparte cause. If, as Madame Récamier's niece hints, she had been first attracted towards the Queen as well as towards her friend by an exaggerated love of notorieties, she remained faithful to the affection she had vowed to Hortense, appears to have followed her to Switzerland, and continued with her to the last.¹

Thus the spring of 1824 had passed away, when the pleasant intercourse with Madame Récamier was brought to an abrupt conclusion by tidings of Prince Eugène's fatal illness. The letter containing Hortense's announcement to her friend of the fresh calamity by which she was threatened indicates the intimate relations established between the two.

"It seems to me," wrote the Queen in April, "that it is my fate never to enjoy any pleasure, distraction, or interest, uninterrupted by grief. I have news of my brother; he has been ill. They assure me that he was better when the letter was dispatched, but my anxiety is extreme. In my own despite, I see him always as in his last illness, and I am far from him! I hope in God that He will not deprive me of the only friend remaining to me, of the best and most loyal man that exists. I am going to pray in St. Peter's: perhaps that will calm me; for my very anxiety makes me anxious. I cannot therefore go to walk with you to-day; but I shall be happy to see you if you will

¹ *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii. pp. 103-4.

come and join me at St. Peter's. I know that you do not shrink from those who suffer, and you should bring them happiness. To desire to see you at present is proof sufficient of my feelings for you.¹"

Notwithstanding their constant meetings elsewhere, Madame Récamier had never ventured so far to brave public opinion as to visit Hortense's house, and she takes a certain amount of credit for having surmounted prejudice in this respect at Eugène's death. "I quickly took my part. I went at once to the Queen, whom I found in the deepest affliction. She was surrounded by the Bonaparte family ; but I was little disturbed by it. In such a case, it is impossible to me to take account of party interests or of opinions."²

Hortense's forebodings had been rapidly realised, and Lebas, writing to his wife ten days after news of the Prince's death had reached Rome, describes the passionate grief of his sister. It was to her boys that the task of breaking the melancholy tidings had been apparently confided, the tutor listening from an adjoining room for the result. The choice had been wise, and the lads had well performed their duty. "Her sons," wrote Lebas, "do not leave her for a single instant, and vie with each other in their care of her. It is what might be expected ; they have both such good hearts, and then she is so good a mother."

But, however softened by the affection of her

¹ *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii. pp. 86-7.

² *Ibid.* p. 88.

children, Eugène's death was a crushing blow, severing, as it did, the single tie linking Hortense to her past. That tie broken, she stood, save for her boys, alone, none remaining upon whose support she could count, none to counsel her at need. And, apart from the love of brother and of sister—the love prompting her old tender saying, "I live but by the life of Eugène"—the Prince had been a friend not easily replaced. With no unusual gifts or brilliant talents, the tributes paid to him both in life and in death testify to the affection, respect, and admiration that he inspired by mere force of high character, singleness of purpose, and simple goodness. "I have lost the best of my sons, and the best of my friends," said the King of Bavaria of his daughter's husband. "The Prince has died as he lived," wrote the Baron Devaux from Paris,¹ "realising Bayard's device, 'without fear and without reproach.' It is easy to perceive the profound consternation caused here by the event. All differences of opinion are merged in it, as they are merged in the true honour of which the Prince was the most prominent example of the century and of which he will remain the monument."

Lebas adds his tribute to the chorus of praise. "French and Italians," he said, "all weep in him the hero and the honest man. I will not speak to you of the effect he produced upon us who had come into personal relations with him, who have known him, who have been in a position to appreciate that constant

¹ *La Jeunesse de Napoléon III.* (Pol), p. 236.

kindliness, that inexhaustible benevolence, that need of seeing all who surrounded him made happy.”¹

Hortense had learnt endurance since the days when her first-born lay in his small coffin. She bore her fresh misfortune with courage. In May she turned her steps northward, arriving at Munich in time to assist at her brother's solemn funeral, deferred till then, and thence proceeding to Arenenberg.

The parting from Prince Napoleon must have been his mother's chief regret in leaving Rome. At seventeen she doubtless felt that he needed a home more congenial than his father's house was likely to prove to a lad of his temperament and spirit; and her anxieties were enhanced by the fact that his *gouverneur*, Colonel Armandi, with whom she was on good terms, had been dismissed at this moment by the ex-King, “in the most gracious terms,” said Lebas, “and in the most odious manner.” Armandi was bitterly resentful, and only consoled by the conviction that he had been mistaken in believing his pupil cold and that he had in truth succeeded in winning his affection. “You cannot imagine,” he wrote, “how much I am comforted by this idea. I assure you it has cost me much to leave him. I had grown fond of him little by little, almost without being conscious of it. My heart is torn.”² Hortense's children had, it is evident, inherited her power of attaching those about them.

¹ *La Jeunesse de Napoléon III.* (Pol).

² *Ibid.* p. 24.

It had been a melancholy home-coming for the Queen, and from Arenenberg she wrote, in June, a letter to Madame Récamier full of sadness. "I cannot say," she told her, "that I am well, when I have lost all I have on earth ; still, my health is not bad. I have just had the most painful experiences. I have seen once again all that was connected with my brother. I do not shrink from grief, and it may be that consolation is found in the midst of it. This life, so full of trouble, agitates no longer those whom we mourn. I have tears ; he no doubt is happy. You, who understand so well, will guess all that I have had to undergo. I am at present in my retreat. Nature here is superb. Notwithstanding the lovely Italian sky, I found Arenenberg very beautiful ; but regrets must always pursue me—it is my destiny. Last year I was so well content ; I was proud of regretting nothing, of desiring nothing in this world : I had a good brother, good children. Now I have to repeat to myself that there are ties still rendering me necessary. . . . I have not asked about your plans, but nevertheless I shall be much interested in knowing them. Do not be like me, who am living without a future, and mean to continue where fate places me. Perhaps I shall stay in my country home this winter, if I can heat the rooms. . . . Adieu. Do not altogether forget me ; believe that your friendship did me good. You understand that it is the voice of a friend that comes from a place of misfortune and solitude. Will you repeat to me that I am unjust if I complain too

much of fate, and that some friends still remain to me?—HORTENSE.”¹

It was a melancholy summer. Arenenberg might hold its own against the beauty of Italy, but besides the sorrowful sense of loss, the travellers had found a second winter prevailing in Switzerland; and except her son and his tutor, the Queen’s solitary companion was Mademoiselle de Courtin,² a pupil of Madame Campan’s belonging to her household, whose temper was at the present moment—according to M. Lebas—unfortunately affected by ill-health. It says much for the kindness of her mistress that there is no sign that she had resented the singular behaviour of her dependant, who, attached to Prince Eugène as a daughter, had shown her sorrow at his loss by “a condition of exasperation towards the Queen, which,” wrote the tutor, “I can only attribute to mental derangement caused by violent grief.” The ever-cheerful Bertrand had, it would seem, wearied of life in exile and returned to France, and these four were alone at first together at Arenenberg.

As the year advanced their solitude was interrupted by guests, never absent for long. Amongst them was once more the Grand Duchess Stéphanie, now a widow, but in spite of her mourning bringing with her an atmosphere of gaiety and freshness into the sad little circle, so that M. Lebas notes that when she left, all

¹ *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii. pp. 87-9.

² Afterwards married to M. Delavigne.

laughter and amusement departed with her. Hortense wrote to Madame Récamier of her cousin with enthusiasm. "Her brilliant imagination," she said, "her bright intelligence, her good sense, and that charm born of the harmony of all the faculties, makes her a delightful and remarkable woman. She enlivens my retreat, and softens my profound grief. We speak our native language; it is that of the heart, and you are acquainted with it, since in Rome we understood each other so well. I claim your promise to come to Arenenberg. It will always be sweet to me to see you again. I cannot separate you from one of my greatest sorrows; and that is to tell you that you are dear to me."

Hortense's turn had come to offer sympathy to her friend, though not by reason of a death. The gratitude of the Bourbons had been shown to Chateaubriand by his dismissal. It is difficult to believe that a blunder of the kind committed by those who had displayed so much enmity towards herself can have affected the Queen painfully; but the terms in which she alluded to the event were well chosen and graceful. "It is curious how a chain is formed by the links of affection! Have not I myself, madame—I, withdrawn from the world, a stranger to all—have not I felt sorry to see a distinguished man removed from the management of affairs? Is it due to the interest you have caused me to take in him, or is it rather that, as a Frenchwoman, I like to find merit and superiority honoured in my country?"¹

¹ *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii. pp. 136-7.

Carrying out her intention, Hortense spent the first winter after her great loss in the retirement of her Swiss home, amidst the winds and tempests raging round the unsheltered hill upon which it stood. The experience did not induce her to repeat the experiment, and the following winters were spent successively at Rome. Before leaving for the south in the autumn of 1825 the Queen had a melancholy duty to perform in paying a visit of condolence to her sister-in-law, Eugène's widow, who had suffered a fresh grief in the death of her father. The King had been a loyal friend to the Imperial connection, and Hortense's sympathy will have had the added sincerity produced by a sense of personal loss. "You have forgotten the most pronounced of them all," Maximilian had once observed when a list containing the names of those suspected of Bonapartist proclivities was submitted to him. The name omitted had been his own. Nor had the fallen race so many protectors left that they could afford to lose one bold and loyal in avowing his friendship.

It may have been owing to the King's death that unusual difficulties were experienced in obtaining the necessary passports for Hortense's present journey, and a letter to his father from Prince Louis displays a certain amount of amused irritation at the consequent delays.

"Unfortunately it is not to announce our departure that I am writing to you," he wrote from Augsburg on November 20, "but to tell you that we are obliged to

wait another fortnight for our passports. All was packed ; we were ready to start. Bavaria had given passports, and permission from Austria had arrived, when new hindrances were interposed. I do not know why it is now necessary (for the first time) that France should sign our passports, and the Ambassador, to add to the trouble, has written to Paris to ask for the authorisation, which can only arrive in a week or ten days. A congress will soon be required before we can change our place of abode. . . . Is Napoleon married ? It is centuries since we have had any letters. He probably believes that we are on the way.”¹

Hortense's vexation had been increased by the apprehension that she would not arrive at her destination in time to assist at the marriage of her son with his cousin, the daughter of Joseph Bonaparte ; but the wedding did not take place so soon as was expected, and it had not been celebrated when mother and son met at Florence before the end the year.²

By January Hortense was settled at Rome, and

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. pp. 117-18.

² M. Turquan (*La Reine Hortense*, p. 341) states that the marriage took place three years and a half earlier, at which date the bridegroom would not have completed his sixteenth year. He no doubt confused Hortense's son with his namesake, son to Lucien Bonaparte, who married Joseph's elder daughter. The blunder is only worth noticing as discrediting the accuracy of a writer whose work, almost from first to last, is directed against the Queen's character. The passage runs thus : "Elle eut bientôt à s'occuper du mariage de son fils aîné avec la fille de Joseph Bonaparte. Ce mariage fut célébré à Bruxelles le 29 juin, 1822. Après le départ du jeune ménage, Hortense, se trouvant un peu seule, voulut aller passer l'hiver à Rome."

there, or in the Villa Paolina, bequeathed by his aunt, Pauline Borghese, to Prince Napoleon, the ensuing winters were spent, whilst in the summer Arenenberg as usual claimed its owners. Before Hortense turned her steps southwards in the autumn of 1827 a change was made in her household, the faithful Lebas being informed that his services were no longer required. To tutor or governess, after a long term of years, the intimation must always be painful, nor is it altogether easy to make it in a fashion that does not excite criticism on the part of the recipient. Lebas accepted his dismissal in an injured spirit, conceiving that he was hardly dealt with. That he had done his best for the boy entrusted to his care cannot be questioned; yet Louis Napoleon, at nineteen, and after the parting had taken place, declared, according to his foster-sister, afterwards Madame Cornu, that he knew nothing and that his mind had received no bracing discipline. He set vigorously to work to carry on his own education, attempting to supply what he felt to be wanting, began his studies, as it were, afresh, and steadily resisted his mother's endeavours to draw him into society at Rome.¹ It was possibly the development of scholarly tastes—the only tastes, one would imagine, possessed by the two in common—that accounts for the cordiality of his tone towards a father of whom he had seen so little. In November of this year he was writing to the ex-King that the older he grew the more he appreciated his good fortune in the possession

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 121.

of a like father to instruct him by his counsels.¹ When, some two years later, Louis Bonaparte refused his consent to a plan formed by the Prince of joining the Russian army against the Turks, his son gave proof that his professions of deference had been no empty form, since he relinquished the idea, explaining that it was affection for his father that induced him to abandon it.²

Lebas must have watched from a distance, with displeased dismay, his pupil's career. When the two met again, it was as Emperor of the French and President of the Institut de France, on which occasion Napoleon III.'s former tutor was charged with the duty of presenting to him the deputies of the Five Academies.³

Occasionally, during these Roman winters, the light catches the figure of the Queen and throws it into relief. Her salon had assumed the character of a social centre where those of similar views and sympathies met. Yet, identified with the Bonapartes as she necessarily was—her brother-in-law, the Prince Borghese, feared to compromise himself by calling upon her—the Maréchal de Castellane, describing a visit paid by his father to the Queen, states that her conversation showed nothing but an earnest desire for the welfare of France, with entire resignation to her own destiny and that of her children.⁴

¹ *Napoléon III. avant l'Empire*, t. i. p. 3.

² *Ibid.*

³ *La Jeunesse de Napoléon III.* (S. Pol), p. 368.

⁴ *Maréchal de Castellane*, t. ii. p. 109.

Two years later a more detailed picture of the Queen and her Roman surroundings is painted by the Comte d'Haussonville, who became acquainted with her during the winter of 1828-9.¹ His father, formerly attached to the Imperial Court and now filling a post at the Embassy, had consulted his chief, Chateaubriand, as to the propriety of presenting his son to the stepdaughter of his old master, and had received cordial encouragement to do so.

"I wish," added the Ambassador, "I could go to the house of the Duchesse de Saint-Leu myself."

Young d'Haussonville was not backward in making use of the opportunity of becoming a frequenter of a salon infinitely gayer, as he observes, than the Embassy. There politics offered no obstacle to social intercourse. At all times accustomed, with the ease of a woman of the world, to adapt herself to her surroundings, with her Royalist guests Hortense became, if not a Royalist, at least a Beauharnais—"the daughter of a well-born French gentleman"; and if she assumed at other times the attitude of a Queen, it was when none were present whose susceptibilities could be offended. For the rest, the company admitted to her salon was mixed, artists finding a privileged place in it; whilst, according to d'Haussonville, not a few adventurers had succeeded in gaining an entrance. A M. Cottrau, both painter and musician, good-looking and young, was a favoured guest; there was music and dancing, nor did the Queen refuse at times to take her part in a quadrille,

¹ D'Haussonville, *Ma Jeunesse*, p. 197.

going so far, on one occasion, as to join in a valse. "He is very tall now," she observed to the elder d'Haussonville, speaking of his son, "when I remember having taken him on my knee. I must valse with him—it will be too droll." "And that is how," adds her partner, "I came to valse with Queen Hortense."

Louis Napoleon was rarely to be met in his mother's salon, whether because he was absorbed in his studies, or because, as Royalists reported, he preferred the society of a few congenial spirits. D'Haussonville confesses that, warned by his father to avoid any intimacy with a man already, it would appear, suspected of dangerous proclivities, he felt no temptation to disregard the paternal injunction. To the Queen the position of her sons, debarred from the hope of gaining distinction, and shut out from any public career, could not fail to be a source of bitterness; and walking on the Pincio with the elder d'Haussonville, she once pointed out to him the two young men—his son and her own—some little way in front, and, with a sigh, compared their destinies.

"You are happy," she told her companion. "Your son has a career before him." If only Louis could be granted a sub-lieutenancy in a French regiment!

D'Haussonville's recollections give a picture of the fashion in which the winters at Rome were passed; the reminiscences that the old intendant at Arenenberg supplied to Mr. Blanchard Jerrold describe the summers spent at the lake-side château, sometimes in quiet and solitude, sometimes enlivened by the

society of many guests, and not otherwise than gay.

Music continued to be a resource ; a small theatre had been arranged ; and rides and drives were taken. The studies Louis carried on at Rome were not intermitted at Arenenberg ; and from the window of his mother's room she commanded a view of his apartment, and could catch a glimpse of her son as he sat at his work. By 1830 he had taken a step calculated to prepare him for whatever opportunities life might offer, and entered as a cadet the military school at Thun, becoming there acquainted with the roughness of that practical campaigning forming a feature of the course prescribed by the Swiss authorities. If he was a scholar and a student, he was also a Bonaparte, and would have felt ill-equipped for the business of life without some training in military science.

Thus mother and son were spending their days when the news of the Revolution in Paris flashed through Europe, and it became known that Charles X., the Bourbon King, had fled from his capital.

CHAPTER: XXVI

1830—1831

The July Revolution in Paris—Hopes and disappointments—The two Princes—Condition of Italy—The Queen at Florence and Rome—Her sons join the insurgents—Her fears and anxieties—Prince Napoleon's death.

IT is not difficult to imagine the excitement produced at Arenenberg by the tidings from Paris. The Bourbons had ruled France for fifteen years; whilst the Imperial family, exiled and proscribed, had looked on helplessly. Regarding Hortense's secret sentiments during that period it is only possible to hazard a conjecture. She may have been sincere in her reiterated assertions that greatness, the pomp and parade of royalty, the life of palaces and courts, held less attraction for her than for others; what is certain is that she had ever striven, in days when circumstances made it difficult, to enjoy the society and companionship of friends rather than of courtiers, and to collect around her men and women of congenial tastes and inclinations, with whom she could mix in a measure on equal terms. To believe that she could have viewed with callousness the exclusion of sons she adored from the destiny which had appeared assured to them at their

birth, that she was content that the children upon whom so many hopes and expectations had centred should live obscure and inglorious lives and die exiles from their native land, denied so much as the rights of citizenship, would be to attribute to her a scarcely credible indifference to worldly advantages, and a total absence of the ambition natural to an imaginative nature. The attitude could scarcely be expected of any mother, and least of all of one brought up in Napoleonic traditions and ideals, and whose eyes had been dazzled by the brilliance of the Empire.

For fourteen long years—since January, 1816—the Bonaparte race had been the pariahs of Europe, their places of abode prescribed and dictated; permitted on sufferance to dwell in certain specified places, and forbidden, under pain of death, to set foot in France. The comprehensiveness of the decree of perpetual banishment enacted against all of Napoleon's blood is a measure of the terror their name inspired; and when Louis XVIII., in reference to claims advanced by Jérôme's wife—cousin-german to the Czar—replied, "*Il n'y a pas de justice en France pour les Bonaparte,*" he accurately summarised the situation.

At the news of the Revolution in Paris, it seemed that all might be changed. With the tidings that Charles X. was a fugitive from his capital, the future became suddenly crowded with possibilities—possibilities perhaps always existing, latent and unacknowledged, and now assuming colour and form. To those who have forfeited all, who have nothing

further to lose, change, dreaded by the more fortunate, is full of promise. When, however, it became known that the deposed King had been replaced by Louis Philippe—chosen, according to M. Thiers, for the sole reason that no other alternative to a republic was at hand—the Bonapartes must have realised that their hour was not come. Overtures were indeed made to Prince Napoleon, engaged in industrial inventions at Florence, to head an Imperialist party at Paris, but he had declined to adopt a course which would result in civil war, and no further move was made.

Many hopes had nevertheless been based upon the liberal principles and professions of the new King, and the scattered members of the Imperial family were looking eagerly forward to the removal of their sentence of banishment. “Enfin vous allez être des Français,” exclaimed Jérôme’s wife, as she kissed her children; ¹ and Prince Louis, from Thun, where the tidings reached him, wrote, full of joyous excitement, to his mother.

“What is extraordinary,” he said, “is that every one rejoices. We are very quiet in our little corner, whilst at a distance men are fighting for their dearest interests. . . . The tricolour is actually floating in France! Happy are those who can be the first to restore to it its old glory.” ²

From America, Joseph Bonaparte made a public and

¹ *Mémoires du Roi Jérôme*, t. vii. p. 448.

² *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 137.

ineffectual manifesto on behalf of his nephew, the King of Rome, now Duke of Reichstadt—a protest condemned by his brother Jérôme, nearer to the scene of action, as useless and ill-judged. All alike were quickly to learn how vain had been the anticipations of the proscribed race of their readmission even to the rights of simple citizenship, and it was soon clear that their position was to be in no wise altered for the better by the fall of the Bourbon dynasty. To the helpless head of their house, the great Emperor's son, it was natural that those who cherished his father's memory should turn their eyes; and it may have been at this time—though the letter is undated—that Prince Louis wrote to convey to the Duke the expression of his loyalty and devotion. Tidings had come of his cousin's illness, and uncertainty with regard to it was causing deep anxiety. "If you only knew," wrote the Prince, "all our affection for you, and to what an extent we are devoted to you, you would understand our grief at the absence of any direct relations with one whom we have been brought up to cherish as our kinsman, and to honour as the son of the Emperor Napoleon. Ah! if the presence of your father's nephew could do you any good, if the care of a friend who bears your name could a little relieve your sufferings, I should be too happy to be able to be in any way of use to him who is the object of all my affection."¹

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 158.

The Prince's professions were the direct result of the training of a mother whose heart, remembering the joy that had hailed his birth, will have turned often and pitifully towards the pathetic figure of the lonely lad, in the hands of his father's foes and dissevered by every means in their power from the associations of the past. Had Napoleon's son been in a position to rally the adherents of Imperialism around him, who could have predicted the result? As it was, scattered throughout Europe and America, they were compelled to remain passive and to acquiesce in their continued banishment.

A letter written by Hortense at this juncture makes her sentiments plain. She had cherished hopes—so she explained—that, in the new condition of things, her sons might at least have been permitted to serve a country of which they were proud. It was not for Bonapartes to deny the right of a people to choose their sovereign. But France, in her freedom and enthusiasm, still shut her doors against a single family. “What are their crimes?” asked the Queen. “Was it not the foreigner who drove them out? Had they not served France? To dread this family is to confer upon it an honour it refuses to accept. . . . What can I say to my children? . . . I can only teach them that men are ungrateful and selfish, but must nevertheless be loved, and that to have to forgive is sweeter than to cause suffering. . . . You see that my feelings at this moment are sore; . . . but the sight of the law banishing us for ever from the France we love so well, and where we

hoped to die, has renewed all my sorrows. This proscription, decreed in unhappy days, was certainly melancholy ; but it was the deed of enemies. Re-enacted by those we held to be our friends, it strikes straight at the heart.”¹

The protest made later by Prince Louis when Bourbons and Bonapartes were included in a common decree of banishment was marked by vigour and dignity. Addressed to one of the Deputies, it runs thus : “I have just read with pain that it is proposed to place my family upon the same list of proscription as that of the Bourbons. I demand that two families so opposed in their misfortunes should be separated. After the Revolution of 1830 I imagined that their native land would be restored to the kinsmen of the Emperor Napoleon. Should the family of him whose statue was being re-erected be treated like the race of which the symbols were being destroyed ? Had we not shared the exile of French glory and of the tricolour banner ? Yet, in July, both returned without us. I am silent with regard to an unjust and cruel law ; but I protest against a measure tending to confound the family of the man proud to owe everything to the French people with one brought back by the foreigner and ceaselessly claiming worn-out rights belonging to the nation alone. In the name, therefore, of all my family, who will not, I hope, disown me, I beg that we, the defeated

¹ *La Reine Hortense en Italie, en France, et en Angleterre, pendant l'année 1831*, pp. 19-20.

of Waterloo, may not be placed at the side of the conquerors."

Mother and son were agreed. If the disappointment of the brothers at their continued exclusion from France was bitter, it was not to be expected that the Queen would accept an indulgence offered to herself alone, when—"would it be believed?—I received letters from those I should have considered my best friends, who told me plainly that I might perhaps return to Paris, but without my children."¹ The concession, coupled with gracious messages from Louis Philippe, was safely made in the certainty that it would remain an empty compliment.

Meantime the Princes—Napoleon from Florence, where, with his wife, he lived near his father, his brother from Thun or Arenenberg—looked wistfully on at the country they had quitted as children, and—perhaps—awaited an opportunity of vindicating rights other than those of simple citizenship. Already one and the other were longing to win a name as soldiers; and if Louis had been deterred by his father's prohibition from enlisting in the Russian army, his brother had been eager to join in the struggle of the Greek patriots. The cause of liberty nearer home was soon to count both brothers amongst its active adherents. Italy was preparing to make one of her periodical efforts to shake off her fetters; the sympathies of the Princes were engaged upon

¹ *La Reine Hortense en Italie, en France, et en Angleterre, pendant l'année 1831*, p. 25.

the side of the revolutionary party ; nor were they long content to occupy the position of spectators.

The part played by Hortense in the events of the year 1831 has been made a subject of debate. It has been asserted, in direct contradiction to her repeated statements, that she was not free from responsibility for the share taken by her sons in the Italian insurrectionary movement, and that it was with her consent and encouragement that they had thrown themselves into the struggle.

There would indeed have been no antecedent improbability in the course of action ascribed to her. To a woman of a generous and pitiful nature the cause of young Italy might easily appeal, and, outcasts from their own country, she might conceivably have approved of the determination of her sons to lend the weight belonging to their name to the party to which, by sentiment and conviction, they belonged. This might have been her line of conduct ; nor could it have been justly blamed. But it appears clear that she did not rise to the height of self-sacrifice implied by a willingness to risk the two lives dearest to her in an enterprise she must have known had little hope of success, and that her endeavour, from first to last, was to withdraw the Princes from active co-operation with the insurgents. Her narrative, published two years after the occurrences described, and challenging instant contradiction if incorrect, renders her attitude practically certain ; and there is no reason that it should not be accepted as

supplying, on the whole, a true account of the events culminating in the tragedy of Prince Napoleon's death.

In October the Queen had taken her accustomed way south. If the disturbed condition of Italy, the unrest that pervaded it, might have seemed to make it an undesirable place of residence, the fact that her elder son was there and in danger of becoming involved in whatever schemes were on foot may have had its share in deciding her plans; for to the sons remaining to her she clung with the love of a woman to whom they represented all left her by life. Again and again death had struck at those nearest to her, and again and again she had rallied from the shock; but "every time that reason got the better of grief, and I laid hold again with a sort of joy upon what remained to me, pitiless death returned to isolate me further."¹ So she wrote, sadly reviewing the successive losses she had sustained; nor was it any wonder if she viewed the treasures still her own with anxiety, and longed to be at hand to use her influence, if it might avail, to deter Prince Napoleon from casting in his lot with the seething mass of discontent around him.

Avoiding Milan, the journey was made by way of the Tyrol and Venice. In every part of the country revolution was in the air. Hope, curiously enough, radiated from France; and the name of

¹ *La Reine Hortense en Italie, en France, et en Angleterre, pendant l'année 1831.*

Louis Philippe, in the minds of Italians struggling for a national life, was so closely identified with the cause they had at heart that when Hortense, clearer-sighted and less sanguine, predicted that from that quarter no help was to be looked for, her words were regarded as the utterances of a Cassandra.

The fortnight spent by the Queen at Florence was a happy one. King Louis was fortunately absent on a visit to his mother at Rome, and both her sons were with her. Yet during these days the conviction cannot have failed to gain strength in the mother's mind that it would not long be in her power to restrain her boys from joining in the national movement. It was true that to her arguments and entreaties that Prince Napoleon would use his influence in the interests of peace, he had replied by agreeing that the hour for revolt was not come; he would not, however, be able to prevent its early arrival, and must then follow the path of honour. The attitude thus vaguely indicated was not reassuring to the mother's heart. The path of honour—where would it lead?

By the middle of November Hortense had left Florence; and mother and son—all unknowing—had parted for the last time, Prince Napoleon accompanying her on the first stage of her journey to Rome. Arrived at her destination, she resumed her usual course of life. *Madame Mère*, aged and crippled, was still the centre of the Imperial family; a common misfortune and memories in common had drawn together the alien

and hostile spirits, and hours were daily spent by Hortense at the side of the sick and suffering woman.

The political horizon was becoming more and more stormy, the death of Pius VIII. tending to precipitate revolutionary action in the Roman States. A jealous eye was kept by the Government upon those suspected of national or liberal sympathies, and, to the astonishment and indignation of the Bonaparte family, it was intimated by the authorities that it was considered desirable that Prince Louis, as well as his cousin, Jérôme's son—a mere lad—should for a time absent themselves from the city. Indiscreet language used to his fencing master was the offence alleged against Prince Jérôme, whilst to Cardinal Fesch's angry demand for reasons dictating the course pursued towards his elder nephew, none were vouchsafed, save the name the Prince bore and the tricolour trappings of his horse. More loyal to ties of blood and kindred than to ecclesiastical discipline, Fesch, on his nephew's behalf, hotly refused obedience to the mandate, assuring Hortense, who would have preached submission, that to comply would be to confirm the suspicions entertained.

The Queen yielded; but the incident had revived her fears. How should it indeed have been otherwise? The Roman Government, the constituted authorities, ranked her son as a revolutionary, in spirit and sentiment, if not in action; she knew in her heart that they were right. And who could tell where to-morrow might find the lad to whom, with his

brother, her whole world was at present narrowed down. "“Let my children be well, O God,” was ever my single prayer,” she records, “‘and may I die before them!’” It was a petition granted only in part.

For the present matters were to be taken out of her hands. Fesch might bluster, but the Government intended to be obeyed. That same evening the house was surrounded by gendarmes, a sergeant and four of his force demanded an interview with the Queen, and it appeared that they had orders to conduct the Prince to the frontier. In Rome he was not to be permitted to remain.

Hortense was nothing loath to speed him on his way from a place where it was plainly considered that disturbance might be shortly expected, and her relief at his enforced departure may have been accentuated by the fact that, at the moment of farewell, he confided to her the presence in the palace of a friend obnoxious to the Government, who, pursued by the police, had come that morning to claim his protection. Hortense was left to deal with this embarrassing legacy, whilst her son was escorted to the frontier. She was not a woman to shrink from the duty imposed upon her, and her first care was to make arrangements for the safe concealment of the refugee who, once a political prisoner, declared death by his own hand preferable to a renewal of the experience.

Her conviction of the failure awaiting any attempted rising was gathering strength, and on January 8 she wrote reiterating her entreaties that the two Princes,

now together at Florence, would do what lay in their power to urge counsels of prudence. Though a tranquillising reply was returned, the arrival in Florence of Menotti, his representations of the weight possessed by the Bonaparte name, and the necessity of throwing it into the scales on behalf of liberty, quickly obliterated the memory of the Queen's recommendations. The arguments of the young leader carried the day. Already enthusiastically possessed by the spirit pervading every Italian province, the two brothers finally pledged themselves to the cause for which he pleaded. The die was cast.

In Rome the papal election had taken place, the reign of Gregory XVI. had begun, and the Carnival was observed as gaily as if no such thing as revolution was possible. On Shrove Tuesday citizens were reminded that merry-making was carried on upon a volcano. A private intimation was conveyed to the Queen, comparatively at ease in the absence of her sons, that she would do well to be absent from the festivities of the Corso; a sense of uneasiness prevailed, and several of Hortense's countrymen, mostly Legitimists, offered their services to ensure her safety. In company with some two or three of this improvised guard, she sat at dinner, talking gaily, "as French people ever do," of serious matters, the terror produced by revolution, pillage, and methods of barricading, when the conversation was suddenly interrupted by the rattle of musketry. Abruptly the scene changed, the salon filled with those seeking

refuge in the house of a woman who, as she was always proud to assert, had nothing to fear from the populace, and it may have seemed as if theory was to be reduced to practice, and the revolution of which, but a few minutes earlier, the talk had been so light was at hand.

It was soon evident that the conclusion would have been premature. Except as an indication of the direction whither the tide was setting, nothing of importance had occurred. One of the precipitate and hopeless outbreaks in which the annals of young Italy abound had taken place, and nothing more. A regiment had been rashly attacked, a pistol-shot fired, met by a volley of musketry ; some few lay dead in the gaily decorated street, others were wounded, and another item had been added to the long score kept by the people against the Government. All was for the time at an end.

No doubt Hortense's most prominent feeling was thankfulness that neither actually nor in the minds of the authorities could her sons be implicated in the affair. In their absence she could afford to disregard danger, and she did not shrink from giving practical proof of her sympathies by affording shelter to a wounded Corsican for whom her protection was claimed, permitting him to share the place of concealment already occupied by Prince Louis' friend.

The verification of her predictions of failure can have brought the Queen little satisfaction. With

regard to the attitude of Louis Philippe her forecasts were likewise justified, and the obstinate and pathetic faith which, not for the last time, young Italy had placed in the republicanism of France was being sorely tried. The French Government declined to intervene; on the other hand, the new Pope was turning to Austria, the embittered enemy of Italian aspiration, as to an ally. In eyes more sanguine than those of Hortense, the shadow of disaster must have begun to darken over the movement for freedom; and when the young Bonapartes wrote to urge their mother to leave Rome, no longer in their estimation a safe place of residence for her, she at once complied with their wishes.

If her sons felt uneasiness on her account, the Queen, with more reason, was a prey to anxiety on theirs. They had coupled with their request that she would go to Florence the promise to set out to meet her on the following day; and though she had written to acquaint them with her movements, and to entreat them to await her arrival, she could not divest herself of the fear that they might have carried out the intention they had announced, and be advancing southward, every hour bringing them nearer to the scene of possible peril and disturbance. Hurriedly making her preparations for departure, she therefore lost no time in setting out on her journey, and started before the dawn of the winter's day, escorted by a young M. de Bressieux, who had offered his services for the purpose.

Conscious of her disquiet, her companion did his best to distract her attention from the absorbing subject of her alarm, by relating the story of Charles X. and his flight from Paris, at which he had assisted, and by confiding to her his more private and personal concerns. He had just parted in Rome, he told the Queen, from the woman he loved, at the very moment that he had discovered that his love was returned ; but when Hortense, unwilling to accept the sacrifice implied by his presence, begged him to lose no time in going back to the neighbourhood of the lady and to be married without delay, he firmly refused to abandon his post. After all, it was the Queen, he observed, who had brought him good luck. Had he not been leaving Rome, he would have waited long for the assurance of his happiness.

After this fashion the journey was accomplished. When Florence was reached, a bitter disappointment awaited the traveller. Her sons had left it. A letter from the younger explained their conduct.

"Your love will understand us," he wrote, confident even then in the sympathy that had never failed him. "We were pledged ; we could not be found wanting ; and the name we bear compels us to succour the unfortunate races who call us. Make it appear to my sister-in-law that it was I that persuaded her husband, who is unhappy at having concealed from her one action of his life."¹

¹ *La Reine Hortense en Italie, en France, et en Angleterre, pendant l'année 1831*, p. 73.

The blow had fallen. Hortense's worst fears were realised; her boys had definitely joined the ranks of the insurgents. It seemed to her, as she grasped the situation, that her heart was breaking. Yet she attempted to rally her spirits. "*Allons !* one must not give way to despair—one must have courage," she told herself, aware that the time might be at hand when all the force and ingenuity she could bring to bear upon the situation might be needed to save her sons from the consequences of the step they had taken. With her husband, more panic-stricken than she, she took counsel as to the course to be pursued. The two were at one in their absorbing love for their children, and past animosities and offences were not so much forgiven as forgotten in the engrossing thought of the Princes' danger. Louis, almost beside himself, dispatched courier after courier; letters were sent, reaching the lads amidst all the excitement of the approaching struggle and their initiation into their new duties; and the answer was brought back that their part had been taken, that they were organising the national defence, seeking to make use of the small resources at their command to seize Civita Castellana and liberate the State prisoners. Thence to Rome the path lay straight.

Surrounded by the enthusiasm of the insurgent camp, the expostulations of parents fell upon deaf ears, and conscious of his helplessness, Louis Bonaparte urged that the Queen should lose no time in following

her sons and in bringing her personal influence to bear to induce them to abandon their enterprise. This she refused to do. Clearer-sighted than the King, she recognised the limits of her power, and likewise perceived the need of husbanding her forces and her credit.

"I could not do it," she replied. "If they are to return, it must be of their free will. If they have taken their part I could not detach them from it, and it would be said that I was going, with millions, to help them. Then, in the terrible moment I foresee, who—I being also compromised—would remain to be of use to them?"

She had finally acquiesced so far in her husband's views as to have been on the point of starting for the frontier with the object of obtaining an interview with the Princes, when her intentions were changed by an officious amendment to her plans suggested by the Prince Corsini, to the effect that having ensured her son's obedience to her summons by representing herself as ill, a Tuscan body of troops should be in readiness to seize and retain them in safe custody. Indignantly refusing to co-operate in a snare based upon the Princes' well-known devotion to their mother, and possibly enlightened as to Tuscan methods, Hortense elected to continue at Florence, a prey to presentiments of evil and ceaselessly engaged in devising means of compassing the escape of the lads so soon as the opportunity should arise.

The time was approaching when they might have no choice but to yield to her wishes. Flinging themselves with enthusiasm into the struggle, they had done good service to their cause. A certain amount of success had at first attended the insurrectionary movement, and Napoleon's position as one of its leaders was so far recognised that an emissary from Rome was dispatched to confer with him and to request that he would formulate the demands of the insurgents. Proud at heart of her prodigals, the Queen recorded Napoleon's gallantry and Louis' military skill. They were soon to be refused the opportunity of displaying them. The situation was complicated by the hopes entertained that France would at least adhere to a policy of non-intervention, and opinions differed as to the wisdom of having chosen as chiefs those bearing a name regarded with distrust by French authorities. Friends and foes conspired to induce the young Bonapartes to relinquish their position in the revolutionary ranks, and, though with the hope of continuing to act as volunteers, the brothers yielded to the pressure put upon them. "They have made a painful sacrifice," wrote General Armandi, once Napoleon's *gouverneur*, to the Queen; ". . . it is that they may not harm the interests of this unhappy Italy that they must not serve her openly."

Meantime, the policy of non-intervention would certainly not be observed by Austria. Her troops were advancing, and Hortense was renewing her efforts to secure a way of escape. Alternatives were

daily becoming fewer. Tuscany had intimated that she should decline to give shelter to the rebel brothers. Austria, openly inimical, had closed the path to Switzerland. Turkey or England alone appeared to offer a refuge, and when a fleet in the Adriatic barred the way to the first, the Queen, though keeping her intentions secret even from her husband, began to elaborate the bold scheme she afterwards carried into effect, of making her way to London, *via* France.

She had obtained through a friend a passport made out in the name of an English lady and her two sons. The next step was to persuade the Princes to make use of it, and leaving Florence, she set out to seek them. What followed must have seemed, as she looked back upon it, like a confused and terrible nightmare. As she travelled through insurgent districts peasants, decked out with the tricolour, were making holiday; revolutionary leaders met her, confident of success—all was enthusiasm, self-sacrifice, and zeal, coupled with the absence of war materials or resources. Again, as she journeyed on, others sought her, bringing tales of exploits performed by her boys, of their gallantry and rashness; and she pressed forward, projects of evasion filling her thoughts. One day stood out in her memory—a day when a foreboding of disaster oppressed her spirits—and thinking of another March, twenty years ago, when the rejoicing of an entire nation had greeted the birth of the King of Rome, she recorded her im-

pressions in a few sentences written on the walls of the inn where she was lodging, adding the day and hour. She might well have been weighted by a sense of misfortune. At that hour Prince Napoleon was dying.

As yet she was spared the knowledge. News had been brought her of the Princes ; they were well, save that Napoleon was coughing. Starting afresh, she journeyed towards Ancona, to be near at hand in case of necessity. As she travelled, a carriage met her own ; and at the sight of the stranger who alighted from it—as probably at the sight of all who might bring tidings—terror seized her. With his first words it was justified. Prince Napoleon was ill—he was asking for his mother. The words sounded like a knell in her ears.

“He is then very ill !” she exclaimed.

She struggled against despair, refused to contemplate the possibility of this last calamity ; but, in spite of herself, her fears gained ground. “It is in vain that I say, ‘I have been too unhappy’—no, this is not possible. Heaven is just ; it would be too much. No, he will not die ; he will be restored to me ! Still I have no courage or force. . . . At every stage I hear repeated, ‘Napoleon is dead—dead.’ I hear it ; I do not believe it. I must also have been dead, for I felt nothing, asked nothing. I am ignorant whither I am taken during a day and a night. I seem indifferent to everything.”

At Pesaro certainty was brought to the unhappy

mother. There Louis sought and found her. In tears the boy—he was scarcely more—threw himself into her arms. His brother was dead.¹

¹ A wild story has been told, according to which Prince Napoleon met his death, not from natural causes, but at the hands of his comrades, owing to his refusal, for personal reasons, to lead an attack upon Rome. No authentic corroboration of this tale appears to exist, any more than of a second account of his death, making him fall at the head of the insurgent troops; and there seems no reason to distrust his mother's statement, confirmed by a letter written by Prince Louis to his father. "As to the suspicion you express in one of your letters that the death of my unhappy brother was hastened, be sure that, had so atrocious a crime been committed, I should have known well how to find the author of it, and to have taken signal vengeance."—Quoted in *Life of Napoleon III.*, vol. i. p. 197.

CHAPTER XXVII

1831

Prince Napoleon's death—Louis ill—The Austrians at Ancona—Journey through Italy—The frontier passed—In France—Hortense in Paris—Louis Philippe—Ordered to leave—Reception in London—Rumours and reports—Passage through France—Boulogne, Chantilly, Malmaison, and Reuil.

A COMRADE of Prince Napoleon's has told the story of his last days.¹ Listening to his cough, some one would have persuaded him, when starting on a march, to remain behind. He treated the suggestion with light-hearted ridicule.

"Soldât du Pape," he replied to his counsellor, "are you afraid of a spring night?"

It was soon apparent that alarm had not been unjustified. As he lay, his life ebbing away, his thoughts turned to the brother he was leaving behind, and he begged his friend Roccaserra to remain Louis' companion to the end. "We have loved each other too much," he said, "and I fear he will not survive me."

The brothers had indeed been devotedly attached. When news of Napoleon's death was brought to

¹ *Notice biographique* (Roccaserra). Quoted in *L'Empire, les Bonaparte, et la cour* (J. Claretie), pp. 105-7.

Louis, whom he had resolutely excluded from his room, both from fear of infection—the complaint was measles—and lest it should cost the lad too much pain, he burst into tears. “I have no friend,” he cried. “Why am I not dead instead?”

For the broken-hearted mother it was not the time to indulge in grief. In her solitude at Arenenberg there would be leisure enough and to spare for the haunting remembrance of the young life cut short. For the present, mourning for the dead must yield to care and thought for the living, and Louis must be saved. Ill and exhausted as the Queen was, worn out with sorrow and physical fatigue, she braced herself to face the situation, and as an initial step started for Ancona with Louis. The struggle for liberty was manifestly drawing towards its end, with imminent risk to all who had been engaged in it. The papal authorities, it was true, were still showing a disposition to facilitate flight on the part of the insurgents, and passports continued to be supplied to those applying for them; but their allies, the Austrians, were approaching, refusing to stay their advance at the request of the Roman Government, in no further need of their assistance, and were not likely to err on the side of leniency. Foreigners who had taken part in the insurrection were to be seized and treated with all severity. Under these circumstances, to effect Louis’ escape without delay was his mother’s one object. After a vain attempt to conceal and combat the malady that had laid hold of him,

he was found on their arrival at Ancona to be in a high fever, quickly declaring itself as the childish complaint which had proved fatal to his brother. Her terror knew no bounds. A plan of evasion had been arranged, by means of the passport in her possession, purporting to be that of an English lady and her two sons ; the young Marquis Zappi, entrusted by the insurgents with letters to Paris, was to have taken the place of the dead Prince, and the Queen had hoped that a few hours would have seen Louis in comparative safety. Postponement was inevitable ; the doctor who had been called in was peremptory in his orders, and even with the enemy at the gate it was clearly impossible to risk moving the Prince in his present condition.

The very stress of the danger roused his mother to courage. Declaring herself ill, she placed her son in her dressing-room, using every means to impose upon the public and to make it appear that he, like others of his comrades, had taken ship and quitted Ancona. Servants were sent to visit the vessel supposed to carry him, and when it set sail it was believed by all that the Prince was on board. To his father, from whom the Queen had received urgent and unnecessary entreaties to save their son, she dared not confide the truth. She told him first that Louis had sailed for Corfu, and later on caused the Prince himself to write to announce his arrival at that island—a deception severely blamed by the Bonaparte family. Hortense records their censure, but confesses that

she had continued impenitent in spite of it. By means such as these, a network of fiction was woven around the sick-bed where Louis lay chafing at the collapse of Italian hopes. Outside, amongst his comrades, sullen despair was reigning. To those, chiefly drawn from amongst the young, who had raised the tricolour flag, death, fighting, seemed an easier fate than the alternative of flight pressed upon them by more responsible heads. In many cases too the passage money to secure escape from Austrian vengeance was lacking, and in the midst of her personal overwhelming anxiety Hortense was not unmindful of the men who shared her son's danger, placing at their disposal, so far as she was able, funds for their journey.

Meantime, as she sat beside Louis, listening to the storm raging without and the waves lashing the very windows of the sea-girt palace, she knew that peril was all around—that a single false step, a precaution overlooked, the simple indiscretion of a friend, might prove fatal. And discovery meant she knew not what. For every hour that passed was bringing the Austrians nearer, and Louis was excluded from their amnesty.

This was the condition of things at the entrance of the advanced guard of the enemy into Ancona. The presence of Austrian troops filling the town would alone have been a sufficient source of apprehension. To add to the risk, the palace inhabited by the Queen—the property of a nephew—was selected to serve as quarters for the General and his staff. It was at first demanded that the whole of

the available space should be placed at the disposal of the officer charged with the arrangements ; but by a most fortunate chance he proved to be the man upon whom, sixteen years earlier, the duty of protecting the Queen from Royalist violence at Dijon had devolved, and when he learnt the name of the sick lady whose apartments he had desired to appropriate, he desisted at once from his demand. Furthermore, entertaining no suspicion that the Queen was harbouring her son, his kindness and consideration were so great as to inspire her with some sort of compunction for the deceit she was compelled to practice. "It did not go so far as to lead me to confide in them," she afterwards wrote, "but I wished they had been less kind."

At the best it was a situation full of peril. Discovery might take place at any moment. Separated only by folding doors from the room occupied by the Austrians, she trembled lest Louis' cough should be audible, or a masculine voice, inadvertently raised, should betray his presence. In this manner the days passed by and the fever ran its course. It was not a time when convalescence could be unduly prolonged ; and in no more than a week the physician gave permission for his patient to be moved. Upon this his mother, declaring herself recovered, had an interview with the Austrian General, no less courteous than his subordinate, imparted to him her desire to sail from Leghorn, with the object of joining her son at Malta, and further expressed her wish to hear Mass

on the following day, Easter Sunday, at Loretto. Unsuspicious and accommodating, the General provided her with a blank pass, enabling her to quit Ancona; and after a sleepless night the party rose at daybreak, passed through the Austrians who filled the palace, and the start was safely made, Louis, with Zappi, disguised as servants.

Thus the dangerous journey was begun. It is unnecessary to describe in detail the hairbreadth escapes, the alternations of hope and fear and relief by which it was marked. More than once the Prince, well known in some parts of the country traversed, was recognised and his secret kept. At Tolentino the Austrian officer in command, informed by an Italian that Louis Napoleon was one of a party passing through the town, replied curtly that the travellers' passports were in order, and that he was not there to make arrests.

The Tuscan frontier was crossed in fear and trembling; at Comoscia, where a necessary delay was made, the risk was enhanced by the fact that the inn was crowded with fugitives, to some of whom it was likely that the Prince would be known, the recognition of an incautious friend being as much to be feared as the hostility of an enemy. Too ill, exhausted, and unhappy to be solicitous over his safety, Louis lay on a stone bench outside the hostelry, and gave himself up to sleep. His mother was scarcely less in need of rest than he, and in the valley of Chiana they delayed for a night. "Without that

night's sleep," said Hortense, "I should have died."

At Sienna a complication was produced by the development, on M. Zappi's part, of measles. It was fortunately a comparatively mild form of the complaint, and, though in high fever, he insisted upon proceeding on his journey. At Pisa the incognito was changed, the Italian liveries worn by the two young men were discarded, and, in spite of the fact that Louis alone of the party had any acquaintance with the English language, the Queen boldly assumed the character of the lady in whose name her passport was made out, described as travelling to London through France with her sons.

As the danger of discovery lessened and the excitement of the flight subsided, there was the more leisure for the realisation of all that was lost. Louis might be saved, but his brother was left behind, a legacy to the land he had sought to deliver. Proceeding on their way, the road led through Seravezza, where Prince Napoleon had been used to pass his summers, and where, as his mother mournfully reflected, the small amount of happiness he had known had been enjoyed. "I should have liked to spend my life there," she wrote.

All spoke to her of her dead son. Louis and she, wandering out in the evening, hired a little cart, and the young driver, ignorant of course of their relationship to the Prince, talked to them of him, telling of his goodness to the poor, and keeping silence as to

his part in the insurrection, manifestly afraid lest by divulging it he should prejudice his hero in the estimation of the listeners.

The sight of the place, and more especially of the small country house in course of building for the use of the man who would never occupy it, lent a fresh poignancy to the sorrow of those who had loved him.

"You are less unhappy than I," Louis told his mother. "You did not see him dead. You can deceive yourself."

Hortense did not contest the claim he advanced to pre-eminence in grief. It might, after all, she acknowledged inwardly, be just. Had he not life before him, alone and isolated? Whereas for her part, she felt, for the moment at least, that she had but to die.

Nice reached, and the French frontier passed, the Queen breathed more freely. It was true that the law inflicting the capital penalty upon a Bonaparte found on French soil was still unrepealed, but there was no danger that it would be put into force. Louis Philippe had given indications of personal friendliness; he was under obligations to her by reason of the kindly offices she had performed to his mother and aunt at a time when the present position had been reversed; and she felt that she had nothing to fear at his hands. Reassured as to her son's safety, she had time to marvel at her own absence of emotion on the return to France for which she had so often and so passionately longed. Her loss had dulled sensation; she was learning, it may be, that

home is not a place but an atmosphere, and that when those who made it what it was are gone elsewhere, it matters little whether the air breathed is native or foreign.

With Louis it was otherwise. The sense that for the first time since childhood he was breathing his native air raised his spirits. He sought opportunities of conversing in the cafés or in the streets with strangers ignorant of his name or race, the fact that he was an outlaw enhancing perhaps his excitement. Moved by a sudden longing to vindicate his right to citizenship he brought his mother a letter he proposed to send to the King, praying permission to enter the French army. All things seemed possible—the edict of banishment pronounced against him a mere empty form. Hortense demurred; but when he replied that to serve France could alone attach him once more to life, she answered that in Paris it would be seen what could be done to meet his wishes.

Her programme had been carefully traced out. Avoiding recognition, her purpose was to pass through Paris, only delaying there so long as was necessary to communicate with the King, obtain an interview, and explain the cause of her presence in France and her desire of returning to Switzerland.

As they journeyed towards the capital well-remembered places encountered her eyes at every stage. At Nemours she had met Eugène, summoned to France when the divorce had been determined upon. At

Fontainebleau Louis had been baptized, the Emperor acting as his sponsor. Surveying as a sightseer the apartments so familiar to her of old, she recognised some of the attendants who had filled the same post in former times. With her veil covering her face, she listened to the answers to Louis' questions, and drew from what she heard the melancholy satisfaction of believing that the speakers had remained faithful to old memories.

At Paris she took up her residence at the hôtel de Hollande, commanding a view of the boulevard and the column in the Place Vendôme, to which the statue of the Emperor was about to be restored, whilst by a strange inconsistency the race of the man to be honoured still continued proscribed. To Louis, as to his mother, the sight of Paris was full of vivid interest; the Prince looking on with young eagerness, conscious of vague but dazzling possibilities in the future, the Queen's eyes gazing mournfully backward to the past. To her indeed the city must have been peopled with ghosts.

There was scanty leisure for reflection. Through M. Houdetot, the King's aide-de-camp, she notified her presence in his capital to Louis Philippe, expressing her desire that he would grant her an interview. Personally friendly, as was the case with almost all brought into relations with the Queen, Houdetot returned with a discouraging report. The King had exclaimed at her imprudence, had declared it was impossible for him either to grant her request

or to conceal the fact of her presence in Paris from his minister, Casimir P rier. The latter would call upon her. It was not a moment when a representative of Napoleonic tradition would receive a welcome from the constituted authorities in Paris. "The mob," says Guizot, "rolled and growled along the streets, like thunder in a long storm." P rier had not been more than a few weeks at the head of affairs, and caution was urgently needed. When, however, he paid his promised visit to the h tel de Hollande, his manner and address were outwardly courteous and conciliatory.

"Just, no. Legal, yes," was his reply when the Queen observed that, having broken the law excluding her from France, it would be no more than just that she should be placed under arrest. Nor was the interview without results. On the following day she was accorded the audience with P rier's master which had hitherto been refused.

According to Guizot, Louis Philippe received his visitor in the small room allotted to his aide-de-camp; Houdetot on guard at the door to ensure secrecy. Hortense and the King were seated upon the bed. Later on, Louis Philippe brought in his wife and sister, who occupied the only chairs the room afforded.

The King's attitude towards his guest was as favourable as she could have wished. He expressed his deep regret for the continued edict of banishment against the Bonaparte family, observing, when she

confessed that she was accompanied by her son, that he had suspected it, and exacting from her a pledge of secrecy, which she gave. Introducing the subject of financial claims on her part never hitherto discharged by the French Government, he volunteered his personal assistance in furthering her legitimate interests, promising to fill the part of her *chargé d'affaires* in the matter. His wife and sister, added to the party, were equally friendly, listening with interest to her account of the dangers and difficulties she had encountered in contriving her son's escape ; and when Louis Philippe, who had been absent from the room for a time, returned, she was further emboldened to take the opportunity of continuing to speak of the Prince, of the impression made upon him by France, of the letter he had addressed to the King, and of his desire to enter the French army.

Graciously expressing his readiness to receive the Prince's communication, Louis Philippe was betrayed, on the impulse of the moment, into what must be regarded as an indiscretion. Oblivious of the fact that he spoke to a woman liable, according to the law of the land, to be arrested and executed should she be found on French soil, "But why not remain?" he asked. "What will you do in London?"

It was a question that must have caused even Hortense astonishment. Without her son, he must have been well aware that she would not have accepted hospitality from France, and the reversal

of a policy was not to be effected by half an hour's conversation. Replying that it was not her wish to make a long stay in England, and that she desired permission to traverse France on her return to Switzerland, she took leave, refraining discreetly from pushing her advantage, but well satisfied with the result of the interview.

In the end it was arranged with Périer that the Queen was to write from London to request leave to visit the waters of Vichy, to pass through Paris once incognito, pay her respects to the King and Queen, and by this means to accustom the public by degrees to her presence in France.

All, it seems, might have gone well had not Louis, before the move could be made, been attacked by fever, travelling being thereby rendered impossible. "C'était décidément une habitude chez lui dans les circonstances graves," says a sceptical biographer. There is no reason to doubt that the illness, accompanied by inflammation of the throat, was genuine; Houdetot visited the invalid daily, and was in a position to form a fair judgment of his state. But the delay was inconvenient; the 5th of May, the anniversary of Napoleon's death, was at hand; Imperialist demonstrations were expected. The Government was anxious that no representative of the Bonaparte family should be in Paris, and the exact value of the courteous expressions used by M. Périer was indicated by the intimation that only on condition of a change of name—a suggestion equally

offensive to mother and son—could Prince Louis be permitted to enter the army.

Meantime, the desire of the Minister that Paris should be quit of its unwelcome visitors was becoming more and more urgent. Would it be a convenience, he asked the Queen, to be supplied with the necessary funds for the journey. Hortense declined the offer—which had also been made by the King in person—with thanks. As to the plainness of her surroundings, “we are,” she intended to say, “plebeian kings,” but through absence of mind the word popular was substituted for that of plebeian, and a sense in no way calculated to be grateful to the Minister replaced the proud humility of the first.

Eleven days had passed, and still the Queen’s journey was delayed. Louis did not show signs of improvement, and the Government was growing both incredulous and impatient.

“Has not the Duchesse de Saint-Leu made you her son’s excuses as kept to his room by indisposition?” asked Périér of his master.

“En effet,” replied the King.

“Well, be easy. He is not ill. At the hour you were receiving the mother, the son was in conference with the chiefs of the Republican party, and was seeking with them the surest means of overturning your throne.”¹

Whether true or not, the story probably correctly indicates the kindly attitude of the King, the sus-

¹ H. Thirria, *Napoléon avant l'Empire*, t. i, p. 8.

pitions of the authorities, and the pressure brought to bear upon Louis Philippe to induce him to expedite the departure of his guests. It was successful.

May 5 was come, and Hortense had witnessed the Imperialist demonstrations in the Place Vendôme, when Houdetot visited her to say that unless there would be positive danger to the Prince in so doing, she must quit Paris immediately. There was no alternative, and on the following day the journey was accomplished. London was reached in safety; the fugitives were cordially received, and Hortense acknowledged that liberty was not an empty name.

Of the reports current in Paris an example is furnished in a subsequent publication.¹ "At this hour," Louis Philippe is said to have been informed by his Minister, "this miserable mother, this mother of a moribund son, is visiting the *casernes*, and is presenting to the officers the Emperor's heir."

The truth would seem to be that any want of faith to be charged to Hortense was limited to the facts that, obeying the doctor's orders, she had not confined herself to her hôtel, as, in view of the pledge of secrecy she had given the King, she would have done well to do, but had taken a daily walk or drive, duly veiled, and had paid a visit to the Column in the Place Vendôme. These might be minor delinquencies. Nevertheless, involving as they did the chance of recognition—she did not, in fact, altogether escape it—they may be permitted to explain if not

¹ *Le dernier des Napoléon.*

to justify the apparent harshness of the Government at a juncture when public sentiment in Paris was not in a condition making it safe to minister to its further excitement.

In London there was no reason to fear her presence, and the welcome accorded to her was warm. Though she was not disposed, with her sorrow but a few weeks old, to respond to them, invitations poured in upon her, giving her a pleasant sense of friendliness. Her eyes were turning anxiously homewards, and the question of the route by which it was to be reached and of passports to enable her to set out was predominant. Louis Philippe's suggestion that she should pay a second visit to Paris was not repeated; fresh riots had given the authorities reason to fear whatever might serve to minister to popular excitement; and orders and counter-orders were issued to Talleyrand, French Ambassador in London.

Rumour, as usual, was busy in assigning to the Queen motives, objects, aims, and it was publicly asserted that she had come to England in the hope of obtaining the throne of Belgium for her son. Such a report, like others, moved her to amusement, mingled with irritation. "Doubtless," she observed, "the woman they describe, full of energy, intelligence, and character, would have been my superior, but she was not me." Her old acquaintance, Prince Leopold, to whom the crown of Belgium had been offered, did not, it is plain, attach importance to the story crediting her with designs upon it.

"You will not take possession of my kingdom in passing through it?" he asked lightly, concluding a visit he had paid her.

Duroc's widow, now married for the second time, stayed, together with her husband, a week with the Queen, and she roused herself on her guest's behalf to make the effort of attempting a certain amount of sight-seeing. It was plainly a duty rather than a pleasure, and when she and her guests had gone some miles with the object of inspecting Hampton Court, a short delay on the part of the porter was sufficient to decide them upon returning to London, leaving the palace unseen.

When passports were at length granted her—it was not till the dangerous July anniversaries were safely over—the visit to Vichy which had been contemplated was no longer in question. Arenenberg—and Arenenberg at the earliest possible date—was her object. Even if the King would have been found willing that she should pay a second visit to Paris, Louis' declaration that should he see the people cut down before his eyes he should certainly place himself on their side, was enough to decide his mother upon rendering the contingency impossible, and she determined to skirt the capital in making her way through France. Leaving Paris on one side, scarcely a spot traversed by mother and son was not thick set with associations of the past—to her a memory, to him a vision and possibly a suggestive one. At Boulogne Hortense recalled her visit, with Napoleon Charles, the child of his pre-

dilection, to the Emperor ; the gay tumult of the week spent in the midst of all the pomp and apparatus of war, the distribution to the troops of the Cross of the Legion of Honour, the glad excitement of the time. Here was the scene of the camp, this was where the throne had been placed. It was no wonder if the blood of the young man who had life before him and time to wait, quickened as, permitted on sufferance to spend a few hours on his native soil, he looked back to the time of which his mother told the story. Was France contented with the man who ruled her? And, if not? A chance observation of a stranger, met at Boulogne, may well have sunk into his heart. "Only one course would satisfy all parties," he said lightly, after describing the riots in Paris, whence he had just come—"a republic with three Consuls, the Dukes of Reichstadt, Orléans, and Bordeaux—only the First Consul might end by making himself Emperor." Was it not true? Might history not perform its old trick, and repeat itself?

At Chantilly memories of a different order were evoked. It had been part of the appanage assigned by Napoleon to the nephew now lying in his Italian grave. To whom, Hortense asked the driver of her carriage idly—to whom had the woods formerly belonged? He replied by giving her own name.

"They talked of her here for long," he added. "They always said she was wandering about the country in disguise. For some years nothing has been heard. I do not know what has become of her."

"She is doubtless dead," the Queen replied. "And I know not," she wrote afterwards, "why the idea pleased me—since I was forgotten."

So the dreary pilgrimage went on. To Hortense it must have been a strange and painful experience to revisit, unrecognised, ungreeted, unwelcomed, her old and familiar haunts ; to knock at the door of Malmaison and be refused entrance on the score that she had obtained no ticket of admission ; to kneel at her mother's grave, and find it decked by the hands of strangers with flowers. Arenenberg, at least, was haunted by no ghosts, and to it, as a place of refuge and safety, she was glad to turn her steps.¹

¹ Extracts from a supposed letter from Louis Bonaparte to the Pope about this time are printed in *Le dernier des Napoléon*, and in *La France Impériale*, by M. Élie Sorin. Expressing regret for Prince Napoleon's share in the Italian insurrection, the ex-King is made to add, "Le malheureux enfant est mort, que Dieu lui fasse miséricorde. Quant à l'autre, qui usurpe mon nom, vous le savez, Saint Père, celui-là, grâce à Dieu, ne m'est rien." M. Turquan, reprinting the extracts, states that he was refused permission to authenticate them by the Keeper of the Vatican Archives, access to documents posterior to the year 1815 being prohibited. The letter is contradicted by Louis Bonaparte's will, bequeathing his possessions to "my universal heir, Napoleon Louis, the only son remaining to me. To which son, as a special proof of my tenderness, I leave," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXVIII

1831—1836

Back at Arenenberg—Hortense and her son—His changed position—Visitors at the château—Chateaubriand—Alexandre Dumas—The Queen's Mémoires—Visit to Geneva—Question of Prince Louis' marriage—His love affairs—Jérôme at Arenenberg—Louis' maturing schemes—Parts with the Queen.

HORTENSE had experienced the last great sorrow of her life. Twenty-four years earlier she had been initiated into the knowledge of the meaning of grief and loss by her boy's death. Now a second Napoleon—not, this time, a child, but a man—had been taken from her. Training and the discipline of life had, however, done their work. She had learnt to accept the inevitable, to face misfortune, and to reconstruct the ruins of life, so far as they were capable of reconstruction, on a fresh basis.

Returning with the son she had saved out of the wreck, and resuming existence at Arenenberg, her whole love, her hopes and fears, were for the future concentrated upon Louis Napoleon. Yet even with him her relations were undergoing the subtle and gradual transformation produced by the action of time. The boy she had nurtured and brought up in the Imperial faith was no longer her

passive pupil. He had become a man, with a man's independence, a man's outlook on the world, a man's aims, and a man's ambitions. To inquire at what date the schemes of the future Emperor took definite shape, to examine into the means he employed to further them or to trace the condition of political parties in France and their bearing upon his projects, would belong to a biography of the son and not of the mother. But in reviewing Hortense's later life it must be borne in mind that by 1836—the year before she died—the Prince's first abortive attempt at overturning the Government in France had been made, and that it was for the most part in the stillness of his mother's home that he elaborated the conspiracy culminating in that attempt.

It has been said that Hortense was ignorant, in parting with her son in October, 1836, of the errand upon which he was bound, and it seems likely that the statement is true. She may have been unaware of any definite stroke then to be struck ; nor is it improbable that the Prince had concealed from his mother the risk he was about to run, and the desperate game he was playing. On the other hand, to believe that, living under the same roof, on the closest terms of intimacy and affection, necessarily cognisant of her son's movements, of the visitors who came and went, and of the men who were his chosen associates, Hortense could have been unconscious of preoccupations of so absorbing a nature as those which must have engrossed her daily companion, is a thing impossible ; and to

understand the position of his mother during these latter years that of the son must be taken into account.

When the two returned together to Switzerland, a change had passed over the Prince, dating, if Madame Cornu is to be credited, from his brother's death. That catastrophe, independently of its results, will have touched him nearly. For himself life was beginning; he was twenty-three at the time. For Prince Napoleon it had been cut suddenly short. To Louis such a premature end seemed a hard fate. "To die before you have lived," he wrote, a few years later, of his young cousin, the Duke of Leuchtenberg, "to die in your bed of sickness, without glory, is terrible."¹ That fate had overtaken the brother he loved. Apart from personal sorrow and loss, the event, to be shortly followed by the death of the Duke of Reichstadt, had wholly altered his personal standpoint. So long as he had occupied the third place in the line of succession, he had, again according to Madame Cornu, been destitute of ambition, rejoicing in the fact that he was justified in selecting the mode of life he personally preferred; and to this period may belong a dateless story telling how the Queen pointed out her son to an English neighbour, sketching by the side of the lake.

"Look at that boy," she is said to have exclaimed, probably in a mood of passing vexation. "That is all he is good for. There is nothing of his uncle in him."²

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 246.

² Privately communicated.

Accepting the anecdote as true, the time was coming when it would not be of Louis Napoleon's supineness or his absence of enterprise that his mother would complain. With the death of his cousin all was changed. "It is useless to tell you," he wrote to a correspondent in reference to the last, "all I have suffered in learning my cousin's death. What a fatality to die at twenty-one, at the moment when all hopes were turning towards him and that he might have realised such noble schemes!"¹

The words give the key to the light in which he was to regard his own position as representing, in the younger generation, the Imperialist dynasty. Charged, in his opinion, with the duty of perpetuating it, to this end his future actions were directed. His studies, his military education, the writings—the *Réveries Politiques* and the *Idées Napoléoniennes*—bringing him into public notice, were each a preparation for what was to follow. To his father he might disclaim, as late as 1833, any ambition other than that of a return to his native land, but a passage in a letter to his mother breathes a different spirit.

"You complain," he wrote, "of the injustice of men. I venture to say that you are wrong. How are Frenchmen to bear us in mind when for fifteen years we have striven to be forgotten, when during fifteen years the sole ground of the actions of all the members of my family has been the fear of being compromised, when they have shunned every opportunity

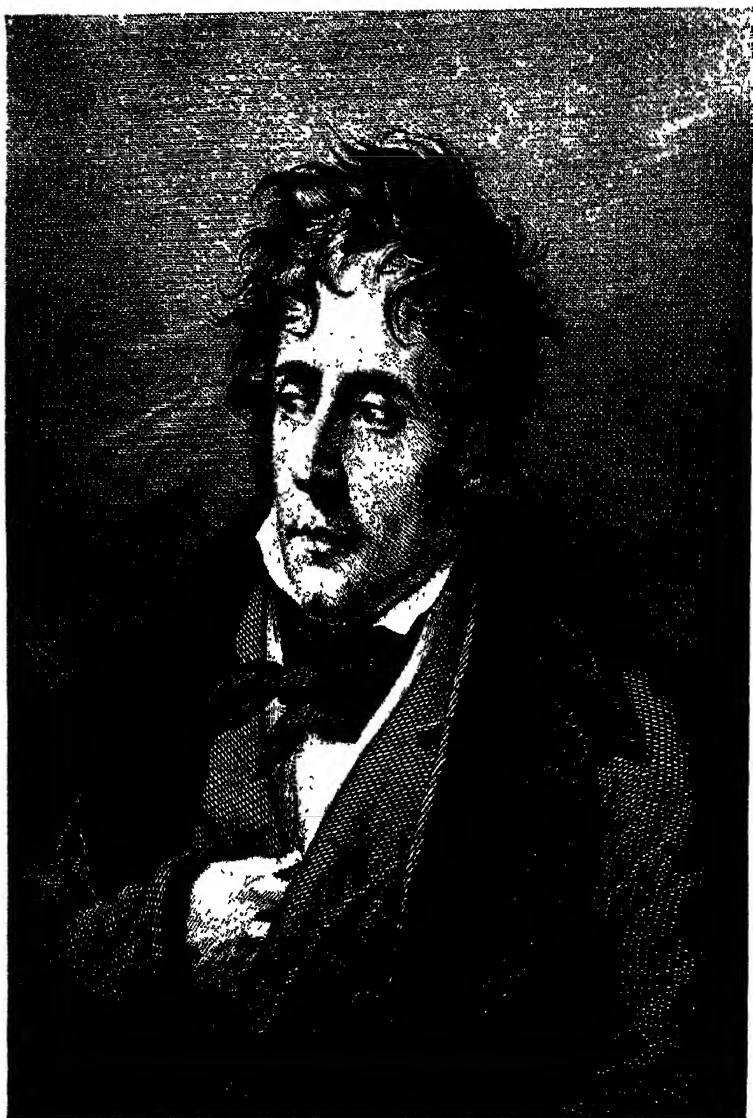
¹ *L'Empire, les Bonaparte et la cour* (J. Claretie).

of showing themselves and any means of recalling themselves to the recollection of the people? One only reaps what one has sown.”¹

It is clear that it would not be Hortense's son who would be content to follow the policy of self-effacement pursued by his kinsfolk; and if the consciousness of the thoughts and schemes maturing in the Prince's brain as he sat at his books in his plainly furnished rooms at the château was an added anxiety to his mother, she was not the woman to refuse her sympathy to his ideals. For the present he knew how to bide his time; and when, after the Italian insurrection, a Polish deputation waited upon him with an invitation to fill the post of leader in their national struggle, he declined the proffered honour, reverting quietly to his studies and to the routine of daily life.

Meantime, Arenenberg was frequented by guests of all shades of opinion. Count Arèse, the Prince's Italian friend, was constantly at the château; acquaintanceships had been formed with the neighbouring residents; Mademoiselle Cochelet, the Queen's former *lectrice*, now become Madame Parquin, was settled at some few miles' distance; and amongst the most welcome guests of the years 1832 and 1833 was Madame Récamier. On the first occasion she was the means of introducing to Arenenberg no less a person than the Legitimist Minister, Chateaubriand, who has left upon record his impressions of the Queen and her home.

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.*, vol. i. p. 242.



From an engraving by Langier, after a painting by Girodet-Frison.

CHATEAUBRIAND.

Though it was the first meeting between the two, they were, of course, well acquainted with each other by repute, and Chateaubriand will have taken a special interest in Madame Récamier's ill-starred friend. Though, as Royalist Ambassador at Rome, it had not been possible for him to pay her his respects in person, he had left the secretaries and attachés at liberty to do so ; and Bourbonist as he was, he had steadily opposed the exclusion of the Bonaparte family from France, having during the previous year embodied his opinions on the subject in a published protest. Hortense had written some notes upon this pamphlet which, though not in the form of a letter, reached, as they were intended to reach, the author. Genuine as was the Queen's admiration for Chateaubriand, and her gratitude for the service he would, if he could, have rendered to the exiled race, a hope that the genius of the poet might ultimately be attached to the Imperial cause may have mingled with more disinterested sentiments, when she asserted that whilst his chosen masters, the Bourbons, "*ceux qu'il a placés dans son cœur si près de la divinité,*" would never understand him, modern France would know how to appreciate him. Ingratitude, the Queen said, did not discourage him, since it was accompanied by the appeal made by misfortune, but his qualities rendered him in his own despite the antagonist of his party, and others existed as unfortunate as the Bourbons and more worthy of a poet's support.

If Hortense had indulged a dream of detaching

the Legitimist Minister from his allegiance, she was not destined to be successful ; yet a "note" of the same nature as hers, written by Chateaubriand in response, shows that her flattery had not missed its mark. The womanly and royal attraction displayed in what she had written was, he said, capable of carrying away a vanity less disillusioned than was his ; nor did he deny the force of her reasoning. At the age he had reached, however, "reverses counting few years would disdain his homage, and, tempted as he might be by a younger adversity, he was compelled to remain attached to his old misfortune." ¹

Some few months later Prince Louis, following in his mother's footsteps, addressed the poet, on the appearance of a fresh pamphlet, in more direct fashion and expressed his admiration of his work.

"You are the only defender of the ancient royalty who is to be dreaded," wrote the Prince. "Were it possible to believe that it shared your ideas, you would render it national. Thus, in order to prove its worth, it is not enough to say that you belong to its party ; you must demonstrate that it belongs to yours."

"Ah ! monsieur," wrote Chateaubriand in reply, refusing to be outdone in the art of adulation, "where is your uncle ? To any other than yourself I would say, Where is the tutor of Kings, the master of Europe ? In defending the cause of Legitimacy, I am under no illusion, but it is my belief that every man who values

¹ *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* (Chateaubriand), t. v. pp. 580-1.

public esteem must be faithful to his oath," and Falkland had died on the battlefield of Newbury.

Had there been any chance of gaining over the poet, Hortense and her son had taken the right means of doing so. Chateaubriand was openly gratified by the incense. "Have the Bourbons ever written me letters such as those I have transcribed?" he asks. "Have they ever suspected that I was more than a maker of verses or a political pamphleteer?"¹

The communications exchanged paved the way for the meeting in September, 1832. The bar of an official post no longer presented, as in Rome, an obstacle to personal intercourse. Madame Récamier, come to Constance to see the Queen, was paying a visit to Madame Parquin in the neighbourhood, and when Chateaubriand received an invitation to meet her at dinner at Arenenberg, there was no reason he should refuse it.

The home selected by the woman he describes as "made by the sword and destroyed by the sword" struck him as *triste*. The view of the lower lake—an extension of the Rhine covering drowned fields—the wide expanse of water, the dark, wooded slopes, the white birds winging their way beneath a grey sky and driven by an icy wind, produced upon the guest an impression of dreariness. Yet here it was that, after having filled a throne, after having been outrageously slandered, the Queen had come to fix her home upon a rock! In Chateaubriand's eyes

¹ *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* (Chateaubriand), t. v. pp. 582-3.

Rome was a place of residence better suited to her. Of the inside of the château the picture he paints is more cheerful, and what he saw interested him. Louis was "studious, cultured, full of honour, and naturally grave," the accessories of his private apartment—weapons, topographical and strategical charts—suggesting, as if by chance and tacitly, the blood of the soldier and the conqueror flowing in his veins. Turning to Hortense, he notes, as others had done, her adroitness, as she moved amongst her guests, in dealing with her dual and difficult position as Queen and as Mademoiselle de Beauharnais; whilst Madame Lenormant, Madame Récamier's niece and biographer, looking on, makes her comment upon the grace and charm—the "gracieuse coquetterie"—displayed by the hostess in her reception of the late Legitimist Minister.¹

Music followed upon dinner. M. Cottrau, the same tall young painter who had frequented the Queen's salon at Rome, and now spent much of his time, as the Prince's friend, at Arenenberg, took his part in it, dressed in a blouse with a turned-down collar—in the opinion of Chateaubriand, a "bizarre costume."

One significant fact was observed by the guests—namely, that the place accorded to the Prince in his mother's house was that of a sovereign to whom precedence was given as a matter of course.²

Another and a very different visitor during the

¹ *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii, p. 413.

² *Ibid.*

following year was Alexandre Dumas. Staying with Madame Parquin, he received an invitation to the château, to which he hastened to respond, leaving a description in his memoirs of his impressions of Arenenberg and its inhabitants. The detailed account of his interview with the Queen may owe something to the imagination of the novelist ; but it is interesting for the sake of the picture it contains of Hortense at this time, as proof of the glamour, in the eyes of her countrymen, surrounding her figure, and of the tender reverence felt by a section of modern France for a woman who had been, for more than twenty years, the object of misrepresentation and calumny.

Dumas was not thirty. A frank Republican, the glories of the Empire were not with him a matter of personal recollection and pride ; yet, as he prepared to meet Napoleon's stepdaughter, so much was he moved that he almost shrank from the risk of a painful disenchantment should she prove other than his boyish fancy had painted her. "I was on the point," he says, looking back, "of testing an idea, perhaps of losing an illusion." As the two met, emotion came near to mastering him. "All generous sentiments animating the heart of man—affection, respect, pity—clamoured for expression. I could have fallen on my knees before her."

Nor was the charm otherwise than enhanced, when, in tones of friendly welcome, his hostess greeted him. "It is the Queen of your youth," he told himself with relief. "This is the voice, the look, you have ascribed

in dreams to the daughter of Joséphine ; . . . for once reality has equalled the ideal."

It was a memorable day to the visitor. He was allowed to inspect the Queen's treasured relics—the Emperor's autograph letters, some of them dated from the battlefield, the wedding-ring placed by Napoleon on his wife's hand, the portrait of the King of Rome upon which, dying, his eyes had rested ; and looking at this driftwood of the past, the young Frenchman's heart burned within him.

As the day wore on, he took courage, and, listening to some of the music Hortense had lately composed, he proffered a request.

"If," he murmured, "if I dared ask a grace." It was that she would sing one of her older songs—all France had once been familiar with it—"Vous me quittez pour marcher à la gloire."

The Queen demurred. She had forgotten the words.

"I can remember them," answered the guest. Rising and leaning on his chair, he repeated the verses—verses written for Joséphine by M. de Ségur on the eve of the Emperor's departure for Wagram, and set to music by her daughter. Hortense, yielding, sang them to the listener who had been a child when they were composed, and "I doubt," he wrote, "whether ever man felt what I felt that evening."

The following morning Dumas was once more at Arenenberg. On this occasion there was speech of other matters, and the present instead of the past, facts



From a lithograph.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS.

instead of sentiment, supplied matter for discussion. The visitor told of Paris as he had left it : blood in the streets, wounded men in the hospitals, too few prisons, too many prisoners ; made, also, confession of his personal convictions, laboured to reconcile for the Queen's benefit his Republican ideals with the admiration he cherished for the great leader of whom Frenchmen were proud. To him, Napoleon was not the tyrant he might seem to some ; he was a man to whom a mission had been committed by God. Such men were not to be judged by ordinary standards. " Their mission accomplished, God recalls them. They think they are dying, but they go to render their account." The special mission entrusted to Napoleon, paradoxical as the theory must, one imagines, have sounded even in the ears of the Queen, was one of liberty. So far in advance of the nations had been the position achieved by France—this was the young man's ingenious argument—at the time of the Revolution, that the general equilibrium had been destroyed. Calling to him all the young, the brave, the intelligent, the Emperor had passed across the world, scattering the seeds of revolution as he went. In France his influence might be reactionary ; for humanity at large it worked for progress.

From past, from present, Hortense turned to the future. Here Dumas remained steadfast to his principles and deaf to the voice of the charmer. Men like Napoleon, he said—subverting with a sentence

the theory of the Imperialist dynasty—had neither father nor son. In the same way as meteors, they flashed across the sky and were lost in the evening twilight. Nor would he, for all his veneration, give the Queen hope for the conqueror's race.

"What would be your advice," she asked of the young representative of Republican tradition, "to a member of the family who should be still dreaming of a resurrection of Napoleonic glory and power, and should be meditating it?"

"I should advise him to awake," was the laconic reply.

And should he persist in rejecting that advice—in her own opinion sound—urged Hortense, what then?

Then, answered Dumas, let him gain permission to return to France, pursue a parliamentary career, obtain influence and power, cause Louis Philippe to be deposed and himself to be elected in his stead. Hortense smiled wistfully. She must have seen little hope of success in the programme thus traced.

"You think," she questioned, "all other means would fail?"

"I am convinced of it," answered the young man.

There was a silence. Then the Queen spoke.

"I wish," she said, "my son had been here, and had heard what you have just said to me."

This was the opinion, this the attitude, of a man who might be accepted as the spokesman of Republican France. The Legitimist, Chateaubriand, was less uncompromising. So long, he said, writing to the

Prince on the subject of Louis' *Réveries Politiques*—so long as his young King, at present in Scotland, lived, no other sovereign was possible in France. Should, however, the race of St. Louis be rejected by God, then—were Republican institutions not impossible—"then, Prince, no name better than yours befits the glory of France."

The words, from a man pledged to Legitimist tradition, would not help to extinguish the hopes and aspirations of the man who was, in his own eyes, the representative of Imperialism. But the designs—the dreams, as his mother might term them—of Louis Napoleon were not likely to be seriously affected, either by the views of Legitimist poet or Republican novelist. Slowly, patiently, silently, he was working towards his goal.

It was not long after Dumas' visit to Arenenberg had been paid that Hortense decided upon the publication of the only original work she ever printed—that portion of her memoirs dealing with the Italian insurrection and the months that followed it from which the foregoing account of them has been largely drawn.

"Madame Salvage will tell you," she wrote to Madame Récamier, "that I have made my great decision to publish my melancholy journey in France. I wrote it this winter for myself alone. Since I have read it aloud, they compel me to make it public. I have yielded, not without regret ; for I have told you how I feel when I take all the world into my confidence

as to my ideas and impressions. I seem to be robbing the people I love, and whom I distinguish by a trust which ought not to be given to every one. It is depriving myself of the pleasure of an aside."

The reception accorded to the book may have encouraged her to edit Napoleon's letters to her mother and Joséphine's to herself. It was a service of real worth rendered to her mother's memory. Whatever might have been the faults of the Emperor's repudiated wife, the publication was evidence that could not be controverted of qualities she might otherwise have been denied, and must have gained her the sympathy of many who had never come under the influence of her personal charm.

Hortense's life was pursuing its accustomed course. Mainly spent at Arenenberg, it was varied by two or three visits to Geneva. Her reception in the town where she had once met with so much inhospitality was cordial. Louis had become popular in Switzerland. In Thurgau several communes had given him their votes at the election of Landmann; and Geneva willingly opened its gates to the Prince and his mother. Hortense liked the place. "The children desired to repair the faults of the fathers," she wrote to Vieillard, comparing the welcome she had now received to the hostility shown her formerly; "in 1815 there was a little grain of madness in every one's brain. . . . All the country has a look of order, morality, and great prosperity. All is gravity and seriousness. In Paris you laugh at everything, and

possess grace. At Geneva all is examined without laughter; but as a school it is none the worse for that."¹ To Arenenberg, however, she always returned, nor did she ever weary of the home of her exiled years. In winter the solitude was great, but skating on the lake had become the fashion, and "after being much entreated and persuaded that she would find it very amusing," the Queen, well wrapped up, permitted herself to be drawn in a sledge upon the ice. "This," she added, "gives me a real sense of pleasure in returning to my chimney corner."²

In summer there were other diversions and occupations. Visitors were more inclined at that season of the year to seek the mountain side; and Louis was engaged in engineering a bridge over a ravine. His mother could have dispensed with the improvement, yet she confessed it had its advantages from a utilitarian point of view, and did not refuse the Prince his triumph when he pointed out that through his labours and the benefits conferred by civilisation she was enabled to prolong her walks to places hitherto beyond her powers. So life went on, as if schemes and projects aiming at revolution were not ripening at her side, nor is it difficult to believe that Hortense was content. "*Mon Dieu*, is this not happiness?" she asked. "It is at least very sweet repose after so many storms. Nor is it I who would desire that anything should come to change

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 442.

² *Ibid.* vol. i. p. 440.

our position.”¹ Thus wrote the Queen not eighteen months before the attempt made by her son to overthrow the French Government.

The Prince's marriage was naturally a matter calling for serious consideration ; and he appears to have contemplated an early one. “I shall soon marry,” he wrote to his mother in 1834, when expressing his regret at financial cares affecting her chiefly on his account, “and all will be arranged. Besides, it is not fortune that confers independence. It is character ; and if to-morrow I should be obliged to sell all my luxuries—which are limited to my horses—and to work for my living, I should be, if not as well content, at least no less happy and independent.”²

A rumour had been current that it was his intention to seek Donna Maria of Portugal, widow of his cousin, the Duke of Leuchtenberg, as his wife ; but he was prompt in sending to the public papers a contradiction of the report. Insensibly he had achieved a position so far of importance that the disclaimer was called for. “He . . . so pushed himself forward,” said the Procureur-Général at the trial of his adherents after the Strasbourg fiasco, “that his biography was published as one of the men of the time.” He had grasped the fact that each opportunity of notoriety, of striking the public imagination, was a chance the more, to be utilised for the

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 442.

² *Ibid.* p. 242.

ends he had in view. Part of all this Hortense doubtless understood; of more she was probably vaguely conscious. What was certain was that his youth was passing in obscurity, that in the eyes of a mother who idolised him life was rushing past and leaving him on one side, that the future was covered with mist, and could not be counted upon to pay the debts of the past. A letter written in a mood of deep despondency indicates the bitterness of spirit with which she saw him excluded from the careers open to other men; deprived, young as he was, of all society and companionship, save of the few faithful friends who sought the retreat where he led the life of an isolated student.

"His courage and strength of character," she wrote, "equal his sad and trying destiny. . . . I should admire him, were I not his mother, which I am very proud of being. I rejoice as much in the nobility of his nature as I suffer in being unable to sweeten the tenour of his life. He was born for great things, and was worthy of them."¹

Her moods of dejection, inevitable under the circumstances, were varied by others, when, as always, the Queen was ready to recognise the alleviations and compensations of her present lot. A letter written in gay spirits to Madame de Crenay² describes an earthquake shock experienced at Arenenberg, when Louis, awakened from his slumbers, had seized his

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 332.

² *La Marquise de Crenay* (H. Thirria), p. 28.

pistols in expectation of a struggle with an imaginary robber, and the Queen confessed that there was a certain satisfaction in having to record no other events, save the approach of winter and the first snows.

It was in November, 1835, that she was thus congratulating herself upon the quiet of her days. If the veil covering the future had been withdrawn and she had been permitted to forecast the occurrences destined to take place a year later, her thanksgivings for present tranquillity might have been still more heartfelt.

Meantime, if Prince Louis was maturing his schemes of ambition, he was likewise engaged in making love. It is possible that his prompt contradiction of the rumour that he was to become the husband of the Queen of Portugal may have been dictated by other motives besides those purely political and public, for he had found attractions nearer home. It is said that a marriage had been in question between Hortense's son and the niece and adopted daughter of the Legitimist friend and neighbour, the Marquise de Crenay, to whom the letter quoted was addressed; and later on a love affair with the widow of a Mauritian planter caused his mother so much uneasiness that she took the step of sending him, accompanied by M. Cottrau, the young painter, on a visit to England. The hopes she had entertained of the benefit to be derived from change of scene were fully realised. Having left Arenenberg in deep depression, if not in tears, and carrying with him a

miniature of the object of his affection, the cure worked upon the Prince by his stay in London was so complete that M. Cottrau related that, on inspecting, according to his custom, the drawers of the traveller's apartment at the hotel where they had lodged, he discovered, forgotten in one of them, the treasured portrait. He had, he added, been careful to leave it where he had found it.¹

A more serious attachment was one formed by Louis for his cousin Mathilde, daughter of Jérôme Bonaparte. It was the custom of the family to intermarry : the two daughters of Joseph had become the wives of their first cousins ; and no objection would have been likely to have been made on either side to the proposed arrangement. Jérôme and Hortense were on good terms, and after the death of his wife—loyally faithful to her Bonapartist husband through good and ill report—he had accepted the offer of the Queen to undertake the care of his younger son, Napoléon, then thirteen, and had left him on a visit of indefinite duration at Arenenberg, on the understanding that his education would be carried on by his cousin, Prince Louis. So far as the Queen was concerned, a paper she drew up of "réflexions adressées à mon neveu, Napoléon, qui aime beaucoup la discussion,"² indicates that she joined with zest in her son's self-imposed task, and in consideration of the fact that a town life was less desirable for the boy than a country one, the winter was to be passed at Arenenberg rather than at Geneva.³

¹ *La Marquise de Crenay* (H. Thirria), pp. 20-2.

² *Ibid.* p. 31.

³ *Ibid.* p. 34.

Whether or not Prince Louis' attentions to Mathilde's brother had been wholly disinterested, a visit paid by the Princess and her father to the château during the year 1836 may have brought matters to a point between the two cousins; and though no definite engagement was entered upon, it was understood that their attachment might result in marriage. The person chiefly concerned, however, was not without misgivings. Touched, like his mother and grandmother, with superstition, the Prince was haunted by a presentiment that his hopes were doomed to disappointment; and writing to the Queen, after his fears had been verified, he recurred to the omen he had looked upon as menacing his happiness.

"When, some months ago, I was returning, after having taken Mathilde back, I found, on re-entering the park, a tree riven by the storm; and I said to myself, 'Our marriage will be broken off by fate.' What I vaguely fancied has come to pass. Have I then exhausted, in 1836, all my share of happiness?"¹

There appeared no reason that his desires should not find fulfilment; and the prospect that his lot would be shared by a woman he loved must have been a source of satisfaction to his mother during the months preceding his daring venture. The hour was at hand when the schemes elaborated in stillness and silence were to take outward form and shape, when he was to exchange the attitude he had hitherto maintained of a spectator for that of an actor in the drama. His

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.*, vol. i. p. 465.



From an engraving by Hall, after a drawing by Stewart.

PRINCE LOUIS NAPOLEON.

mother and he were enjoying the last weeks of the companionship dear to both. To one at least of the two other things were dearer; but, as in the time of failure, so in days when his schemes of ambition had been successful, his thoughts often recurred wistfully to the past they had shared. "I doubt," says some one who knew him in later years, "if he ever regretted anything more than that his mother did not live to see the realisation of hopes they had cherished together. . . . Some of his very last days at Chislehurst were spent in reading over the letters [she] had written to him, and in reviving the memories of those happy years."¹

The solitude surrounding them, the peculiar loneliness of their position, had, as it were, brought mother and son the closer together; and a letter written at sea, in December, 1836, when all had been hazarded and, for the present, lost, shows the place the memory of those days filled, from the first, in his mind.

"I think of you," he told the Queen, "and of Arenenberg. . . . Two months ago I only asked never to return to Switzerland; now, if I gave the rein to my feelings, I should have no other desire but to find myself once more in my little room, in the beautiful country where it seems to me that I ought to have been so happy. . . . Do not accuse me of weakness if I allow myself to render an account to you of all my impressions. One may regret what is lost without repenting of what has been done. . . . When the weather is fine, as it is to-day, and the sea calm as

¹ *Memoirs of Dr. T. W. Evans* (ed. E. A. Crane), vol. i. p. 39.

the lake of Constance when we walked beside it in the evening ; when the moon—the same moon—gives the same blue light ; when the air is as soft as a European August—then I am sadder than usual, and all memories, whether gay or painful, fall with the same weight upon my heart.”¹

“The hopes they had cherished together.” Thus spoke Dr. Evans ; nor can it be doubted that these hopes lent an uneasy brilliance to the future to which mother and son looked on. How far Hortense was aware of any definite stroke to be risked remains, it must be repeated, uncertain ; that she was not fully informed of it seems sure. But it is difficult to believe she was ignorant that some scheme or project was on foot through the summer and autumn months preceding the Strasbourg attempt.

Of the attitude and position of the Prince at the time that his first great venture was in contemplation, M. Guizot’s account, moderate and impartial, may be summarised. Young and unknown, says the minister, save by means of writings winning the praise of democratic journals, he was in possession of a name. That name, however, would have been sterile had it not been supported by hidden and personal force. The Prince had faith in himself and in his destiny ; in his own eyes he was the heir not only of a dynasty, but of the two ideas conferring upon that dynasty its power—namely, revolution without anarchy and military glory. Under an outward appearance of calmness,

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 465.

gentleness, and modesty, he united confusedly an active sympathy with revolutionary enterprises with the traditions of absolutism, adding the pride of a great race and an instinct ambitious of a great future. He was a Prince, and believed with invincible confidence that he was predestined to be Emperor.¹

Such as he was, his plans had now been elaborated, his measures and soundings taken. Everything was ready for the first move in the desperate game. Crossing the frontier in August with a single companion, he had attended a meeting of representative officers, and receiving from them assurances of the Imperialist sympathies of the army, had decided upon immediate action. In October, 1836, he called, on his way from Thun, on the writer, Zschokke. Ignorant of what was in prospect, his friend had expected a second visit. It was not paid. "With him as with his mother," said the historian, "a daring or great idea would inflame his mind till he was beside himself,"² and other matters took precedence at present of a conversation with a literary companion.

He was going to meet his fate ; and sanguine as he might be, he cannot but have been aware that failure might mean death. One parting had first to take place. Sleeping in the hall at the château, the intendant Fritz heard, before dawn on the morning of October 25, a voice call his name ; rising, he opened to his master, who had crossed the garden from his

¹ *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de mon temps.*

² Quoted, *Life of Napoleon III.*, vol. i. p. 312.

own wing of the building, and was knocking at the door.¹ The man, no doubt wondering what so early a visit might mean, watched the Prince go softly up the stairs to his mother's room, saw him come down again in half an hour, carrying a box Fritz believed to contain money, enter a carriage, and drive off, accompanied by his body-servant, Charles Thélin.

An account of the parting scene with the Queen is given by M. Armand Laity, who took part in the enterprise. Explaining that he was going to see a cousin—probably Mathilde—he confessed to his mother that he had a rendezvous on the way with some political adherents. Ignorant of the magnitude of what was at stake, she was, nevertheless, much moved, begged him to be prudent, and placed on his finger, as a talisman against danger, the ring Joséphine had received from the Emperor at her marriage.²

And thus the two parted.

¹ Quoted, *Life of Napoleon III.*, vol. i. p. 312.

² *Relation historique des événements du 30 Octobre*, 1836 (Armand Laity), p. 39.

CHAPTER XXIX

1836—1837

The Strasbourg affair—Louis Philippe's clemency—The Queen in France—Louis Napoleon's letters—The Queen intends to follow him—Her failing health—Fatal illness—The Prince returns to Europe—Last weeks at Arenenberg—The Queen's will—Louis Napoleon's return—Her death.

“ALL that you say of the extravagant behaviour of our nephew Louis is very just,” wrote Jérôme Bonaparte to Joseph, when news of the affair at Strasbourg reached Florence; “we only know here what the newspapers announce; and that is enough to make one sigh over so absurd an enterprise.”¹

It was easy to turn into ridicule an attempt at revolution that must, read in the light of its actual failure, have seemed to have had so little chance of success. But the report supplied by M. Guizot of the reception at the Tuileries of the tidings of what was going forward gives a different aspect to Louis Napoleon's venture, and proves that, to his opponents, the scheme did not appear worthy of contempt. The excitement and disquiet at the palace is in a sense the Prince's justification as a political adventurer.

¹ *L'Empire, les Bonaparte, et la cour* (J. Claretie), p. 120.

Acquainted by means of a fragmentary and incomplete dispatch with the fact that the Imperial standard had been raised in the streets of Strasbourg, the Cabinet hurriedly met at the Tuileries to consider the situation. "We talked, we hazarded conjectures, we weighed the chances, we prepared instructions, we discussed the measures to be taken under hypothetical circumstances. The Duc d'Orléans made ready for departure. We passed almost the whole night with the King, waiting for tidings that did not arrive. The Queen, Madame Adélaïde, the Princes, came and went, asking if anything further had been heard. One fell asleep from weariness, and awakened from impatience. I was struck by the melancholy of the King; not that he appeared uneasy or dejected, but he was preoccupied by uncertainty as to the gravity of the event."¹

The passage is proof sufficient that the success, partial or complete, of a plot often described as no less mad than criminal, did not appear impossible.

It quickly became known in Paris that there was nothing to fear. At 6 a.m. on October 30—six days after his parting with his mother—Louis Napoleon, accompanied by some twenty comrades, with one or two officers belonging to regiments quartered in Strasbourg who had been gained over to his cause, passed through the streets of the town, visited one of the barracks, was there received with acclamation and enthusiastic cries of "Vive l'Empereur!" and, it may

¹ *Mémoires* (Guizot).

be, considered the day won. He was to be undeceived. The General commanding in the place, with the bulk of his officers, remained faithful to their charge ; at the second barracks visited by the Prince he was arrested ; and all was not only at an end, but had ended ingloriously. What should have been a revolution had scarcely resulted in more than a riot.

"Parquin," Louis Napoleon had said to his friend and neighbour, a veteran of the Imperial Guard and holding a command in the Municipal Guard of Paris, when inviting him to join in the enterprise—"Parquin, I am going to replace the eagle on our standards or to get killed."

He had done neither. The flag was to wait fourteen years for its eagle ; nor was the death of the perpetrator to lend to the failure the dignity of a tragedy. The treatment accorded to the Prince has been compared favourably and not unfairly with that dealt out, under somewhat similar circumstances, by Napoleon to the Duc d'Enghien. Awaiting—without, so far as could be demonstrated, actual participation in the plot—the result of a conspiracy, the heir of the Condés had been seized beyond the French frontier, hurried to his place of execution, tried and shot in a single night. Louis Napoleon, taken in the act of stirring up a revolution, was to be promptly pardoned, shipped off to America, and further provided by the King with means to supply his necessities upon his arrival.

The contrast is glaring. Louis Philippe's clemency may have been due to generosity ; it may also have

been dictated by prudence. To have presented the Imperial cause with a martyr might have been to reanimate the energy and devotion of its adherents. Moreover, the memory of Napoleon, even to royalists like Guizot, was a shield and a defence to those of his race and blood. "The titles of such a man to the consideration of the world do not all descend with him to the grave," wrote the minister. "The heir of the name and, according to the Imperial régime, of the throne of the Emperor Napoleon should be treated as of royal race."

For whatever reason, Louis was not permitted to pay the penalty of his rashness, and his mother's worst fears were relieved. What her anxiety had been it is not difficult to conceive; nor had the Prince been unmindful of her suffering. As he prepared, at five o'clock in the morning, for his bold stroke, his thoughts turned to the lonely woman at Arenenberg, and writing two letters, the one telling of success, the other of failure, he gave them, with visible emotion, to his aide-de-camp. Should he be favourably received by the regiment to which he was about to present himself, he imagined, in his sanguine forecast, that ultimate success was assured, and the letter announcing it was to be forthwith dispatched. In the event of failure, the second was to carry the tidings to Switzerland. During the first brief flash of triumph the good news was accordingly sent, and though followed quickly by a communication telling of the collapse of the enterprise, Hortense had had time to address to the

son she believed to be victorious counsels of moderation, over which, fallen into the hands of her enemies, they made merry. The second letter had been destroyed, but what is stated to be a copy of it has been printed.

"I have been vanquished," wrote the Prince at the very moment when he was hopeful of success. "I die in a noble cause—the cause of the French people, who will one day regret me. Do not weep for me. Be angry with no one. None led me away. It was I alone who desired to restore her glory and liberty to France."¹

From his prison on the day of his arrest, and whilst his fate hung in the balance and death must have appeared to confront him, the Prince sent to his mother, in her grief and desolation, a letter conceived in the same spirit.

"You must have been anxious at receiving no news of me," he wrote, "believing that I was at my cousin's. Your anxiety will be redoubled when you learn that I have attempted a movement at Strasbourg which has proved a failure. I am in prison with other officers. I am only troubled on their account, since for my own part, in engaging on a like enterprise, I was prepared for any event. Do not weep, my mother. I am the victim of a noble cause—a cause altogether French. Later, they will do me justice and pity me. . . . Courage, my mother; I shall know how to sustain the name I bear with honour to the end. . . . Life

¹ *Entreprise du Prince Louis Napoléon* (Persigny), p. 37.

is but a small thing. Honour and France to me are all in all.”¹

The Queen's determination was swiftly taken. Under an assumed name, and attended by Madame Salvage, she repaired to Viry, near Paris, the house of the Duchesse de Ragusa ; and, ignoring the prohibition to enter France still in force, thence addressed petitions on behalf of her son to the King and M. Molé. There had, according to Guizot, been no need of the pressure she brought to bear upon the masters of his fate. It had been already decided to exempt the Prince from trial and to dispatch him without delay to America. If M. Laity, the Prince's comrade, is to be credited, it was desired to include his mother in the sentence of banishment. “Although suffering and fatigued by a rapid journey, she was ordered to start at once, and, hard to believe, it was to America that M. Molé desired to make her go, without so much as granting her time to put her affairs in order.”² According to the same authority, she was also asked to pledge her son to remain absent from Europe for ten years. She returned the natural answer that she could make no engagements on his behalf, and that he was master of his actions.

Her faithful *garde du corps*, Madame Salvage, having deposited her mistress at Viry, had proceeded to visit Madame Récamier, then occupying apartments at the Convent of the Abbaye-au-Bois, and

¹ *Relation*, etc. (Armand Laity), pp. 82-3.

² *Ibid.* p. 71.

to communicate to her the tidings of the Queen's arrival. On the following day Madame Récamier hurried to Viry, finding the unhappy mother in a condition of anguish only partially relieved by the knowledge that her son's life was safe. Suspecting that, however it might be with him, sentence of death had been pronounced upon herself in a court from which appeal was impossible, the impending separation, no farewell taken, from the son she loved so devotedly was a crushing blow. She was not alone in the conviction that her days were unlikely to be prolonged; and Madame Récamier was painfully struck by the change in her friend.¹

If his mother's relief had been infinite, the clemency displayed by the Government had not been altogether welcome to the person principally concerned. It may have brought home to him the humiliating fact that he had not so much as succeeded in rendering himself a formidable enemy. And that he was to be sent to a place of safety beyond seas, whilst the comrades who had thrown in their lot with his were to undergo their trial at home put him in a position a man of honour may justly have felt to be intolerable. In a letter written during his brief halt in Paris he gently blamed his mother for the indifference he conceived her to have displayed towards matters of more importance than life or death.

"I recognise, in what you have done, all your tenderness towards me. You thought of the danger I

¹ *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii, p. 475.

ran ; but you did not think of my honour, which obliged me to share the fate of the companions of my misfortune. I feel a great grief in seeing myself separated from men I led to their ruin, when my presence and evidence might have influenced the jury in their favour. . . . I am starting for America. But, my dear mother, if you do not wish to increase my grief, I implore you not to follow me. The idea of making my mother share my exile from Europe would be in the eyes of the world an indelible blot upon me, and an extreme sorrow to my own heart. . . . Adieu, my dear mother. Receive my thanks for all the marks of tenderness you give me. Go back to Arenenberg, but do not come to join me in America. It would make me too unhappy. Adieu. Receive my tender kisses. I love you always with all my heart." ¹

To M. Vieillard he wrote in a spirit of greater bitterness.

"I start, my heart torn at not being able to share the fate of my companions in misfortune. I should have desired to be treated as they have been treated. My enterprise having failed, my intentions being ignored, my fate having been, in my own despite, separated from that of the men I had compromised, I shall pass in the eyes of the world for a madman, a man of ambition, and a coward. Before setting my foot on French soil, I expected, in the event of success, the two first qualifications ; the third one is too cruel." ²

¹ *Relation*, etc. (Laity), pp. 84-5.

² *Ibid.* p. 87.

Whilst this was Louis' frame of mind, the future lay dark before his mother. For her, hardly less than for her son, all had been risked and had been lost. The long years of close companionship in the home Hortense had created were over. Exile, not now from France, but from Europe, was to be the Prince's lot for an indefinite period ; hers—did she obey his prohibition—the harder one of remaining behind, desolate and alone. She may well have regretted that the Government had not persisted in their endeavour to make her a sharer in the Prince's banishment and thus settled the question. His reiterated and urgent deprecation of any intention on her part of following him indicates plainly that he was aware of what would be her wish, nor can he have doubted that, in comparison with separation from the single object of her deep affection, a new rupture with the past would have weighed lightly in the balance. A letter written to Madame de Crenay after her return to Arenenberg makes her resolve clear, and shows that she did not intend in this matter to defer to her son's opinion. It likewise is significant of the spirit in which she faced disaster.

"I wished to answer you myself," she wrote, "to tell you that I have courage. You will not be surprised. When a great danger has been just escaped, one can no longer complain of fate, and becomes callous to all the little torments of life. What does the injustice of men matter to me ? . . . I only expect to leave in the spring, for I wish to give my son time to

recover from his grief at seeing me expatriated, and I wish to repeat to him—what is true—that it costs me nothing to quit Europe. Are not the indifferent to be preferred to perjured friends, to countrymen become one's enemies? I want to continue to love them, and to do that I must forget a little what they have made me suffer.”¹

It was perhaps better that the first weeks of separation should have been lightened by the hope—false though it proved—that she was to follow the Prince and resume a joint life in fresh surroundings. But it must have been quickly apparent that the step she contemplated was beyond her power. Always delicate, the events of the past weeks, the excitement and agitation and anxiety, together with the hurried journeys, had taken fatal effect, and on her return to Arenenberg it became increasingly clear to those about her that the life of solitude to which she had refused to be condemned would not be of long duration. As the winter snows melted upon her mountain side, the last spring she was to know was casting its green veil over the wooded slopes.

Throughout those weary weeks and months, no word had been brought from the traveller who had set sail from France in November. Nor was it till the end of March that tidings of him reached the Queen. By that time the fact that her days were numbered was certain, if not to the patient herself, to those who watched her with loving and

¹ *Madame de Crenay* (H. Thirria), pp. 47-8.

anxious eyes. On April 13 Madame Salvage sent Madame Récamier a report which confirmed the forebodings felt by the latter when she had parted from her friend at Viry. The letter from the hand of a friend made in years when the glamour of royalty no longer surrounded the Queen, and only the attraction of the woman remained, is a proof amongst others, like Dumas' young enthusiasm, of the power she retained of attaching to her men and women with whom she was brought into contact.

"I did not answer you sooner," wrote Madame Salvage, "hoping to be able to give you better news. Alas! it is quite the reverse. After a consultation between the doctors of Constance and Zurich with Dr. Conneau, physician-in-ordinary, Professor Lisfranc, of Paris, was summoned as most skilful, and a recognised specialist with regard to the operation considered necessary by two of these gentlemen. After a careful examination, three times repeated, the opinion of M. Lisfranc and of the three other doctors in consultation together was that it was not possible to operate, and they were unanimous in pronouncing an irrevocable sentence, leaving us no hope in human resources. I trust in God's infinite goodness, and implore it with ardent prayer. The Duchess's mental condition is as calm as could be desired in a position like hers. She has been told that the operation was not performed because it was not necessary, and that a course of treatment, with time and patience, would suffice to effect a perfect cure. She had resigned

herself, with admirable courage, to the operation ; now she is happy in not having to undergo it, and is full of hope. In expectation of the operation, which, contrary to my opinion, had been announced to her a fortnight before M. Lisfranc could be here, she had attended to her devotions and made her will. On the morning of March 30, about an hour after she had communicated, she had the joy, which she ascribed to God, of receiving a large packet containing tidings—the first since the *Lorient* had sailed—written by her son's hand. . . . Think of me sometimes ; think of my cruel position. To bestow vain care upon a person one loves and whom one knows one is to lose ; to seek to alleviate—and only to succeed very imperfectly in doing so—poignant and almost continuous sufferings ; to maintain an appearance of calm when one's heart is torn ; to deceive, to seek incessantly to inspire hopes that one does not feel,—oh ! believe me, it is terrible, and one would gladly give up one's own life.”¹

Part of the budget come at length to bring comfort to Hortense's sad heart has been quoted. Written at different times during the voyage, a portion of it, bearing the date of January 1, 1837, shows how the thoughts of the Prince reverted to the mother he had left behind in her solitude.

“ My dear *maman*, ” he wrote, “ this is the first day of the year. I am 1,500 miles away from you, in another hemisphere. Happily, thought traverses that

¹ *Souvenirs et correspondance de Madame Récamier*, t. ii. p. 478.

space in less than a second. I am near you. I am expressing to you my regrets for all the torments I have caused you and I am renewing the expression of my tenderness and gratitude. . . . At half-past four we were at table ; . . . it was seven o'clock at Arenenberg. You were probably at dinner. I drank to your health. Perhaps you were doing the same by me ; at any rate, I liked to believe it at that moment. I also thought of my companions in misfortune. Alas ! *I am thinking of them always*. I was thinking that they were more unhappy than I, and this idea rendered me more unhappy than they."

The last portion of the missive was added upon his arrival at Rio Janeiro. "I hope this letter will soon reach you," he wrote. "Do not think of coming to join me. I do not even know as yet where I shall settle. . . . Adieu, my mother—a *souvenir* to our old servants, and to the friends of Thurgau and Constance."¹

Madame Salvage's letter shows under what circumstances her son's reached the Queen. A few days later, on April 3, when she was awaiting the operation which was not to be performed, she sent him what might be a final farewell. "I am to undergo an absolutely necessary operation," she wrote. "In case it is unsuccessful, I send you by this letter my last blessing. We shall meet again—shall we not?—in a better world, where you will come to join me as late as possible ; and you will believe that in

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. i. p. 465.

leaving this world I regret nothing but you and your good tenderness, which alone has lent it its charm. It will be a consolation to you to remember that, by your care, you have made your mother as happy as she was capable of being. You will think of all my tenderness for you, and you will take courage. Believe that a kind and penetrating eye is kept by those who go upon what they leave behind; but certainly one meets again. Have faith in this sweet idea; it is too necessary not to be true. . . . I press you to my heart, my dear. I am very calm, have much resignation, and I still hope that we may meet again in this world. May God's will be done! Your tender mother, HORTENSE."

By June a second letter from the Queen had caused the Prince to abandon any plans he might have formed in America and to start without delay for Europe. Written when the decision of the doctors had been taken, and in ignorance of its meaning, it merely stated that no operation was to be performed. A summons added by Dr. Conneau on the cover lent to her words a fatal significance. "Venez, venez," wrote the physician. It was the Queen's sentence of death, and so her son understood it.

The Prince was dining with a friend when the letter was given to him. "My mother is ill," he said, as he broke the seal and glanced at the contents. "I must see her. Instead of a tour in the states I shall take the next packet for England. I will apply

for passports for the continent at every Embassy in London, and if unsuccessful will make my way to her without them."

A son so devoted could have done no less. "He seemed to idolise his mother," said the friend who described the scene; "when speaking of her the intonations of his voice and his whole manner were often as gentle and feminine as those of a woman."¹ By the earliest opportunity he had taken ship and was on his way to Switzerland, *via* London.

Still at sea he wrote to announce his return to the Queen, begging her, lest there should be delay in obtaining the necessary passports, to send news of her health to England. "You understand," he told her, "how impatient I am to know how you are. I dare not yet believe in the happiness of seeing you again so soon. Ah, how the thought of climbing the height of Arenenberg makes my heart beat! Should Heaven permit me to be near you in a few weeks, I shall believe everything that has happened to be a dream, when, after eight months, once again in the same place, I ponder all that has passed."²

Kept in London by the difficulty of obtaining facilities enabling him to reach Switzerland in safety, he wrote to his father, for whom he seems to have cherished a genuine affection, in a spirit of deep discouragement. "If you knew how sad I am," he said,

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. ii. p. 15.

² *Ibid.* p. 25.

"in the midst of this London tumult ! . . . My mother is dying, and I cannot go to carry her a son's consolations. My father is ill, and I may not hope to see him. What have I done, to be thus the pariah of Europe and of my family ? "

It was not unnatural that the attitude assumed by the son of a younger brother should have been resented by the Bonaparte clan. Joseph, tenacious of his dignity, and who had jealously maintained, even against the Emperor, his position as eldest born, would not view with complacence his nephew's claim to represent the family. Nor was Jérôme less indignant ; and in a letter to his uncle, Cardinal Fesch, written from London in July, he mentioned that Louis was there, but that he had not seen him. "He declares himself chief of the Napoleonist party," he added. "I am ignorant of his plans, and disavow them beforehand." ¹

The Queen was not to be deprived of the support and comfort of her son's presence at her hour of greatest need. But before he had succeeded in overcoming the obstacles placed in the way of a return to Switzerland she must—in spite of the loving deception practised by those around her—have accustomed herself gradually to the thought of the approach of death. In religion she had sought consolation in her loneliness and sickness ; and lying on her couch in the garden she had made and loved, she waited through the summer days for the Prince's

¹ *L'Empire, les Bonaparte, et la cour* (J. Claretie), p. 111.

coming ; gentle and considerate towards her dependants, and, as we may surely hope, untroubled by regret for the life that was slipping from her. It is a merciful provision that those to whom the last summons is sent forth are not commonly found reluctant to yield it obedience. To some of them it is no wonder if, as to tired travellers, the thought of the shelter of the inn whose doors stand open to all should afford a welcome relief ; and that "the world is not so much a place to live in as to die in" is a truth incomprehensible to the young, but not unsoothing to such as are approaching the end of their mortal lease. Hortense had loved life and had longed to see good days ; yet now, though old age had not yet laid its full burden upon her, it is easy to believe that she was not loath to relinquish the struggle and to abandon the fight. No choice was to be given her ; and, a lonely and sorrowful woman, she prepared to take her way hence, awaiting the end in the home she and her boy had shared for twenty years, and where she had taken her last farewell of him. When she was gone, the place remained to the Prince impregnated and hallowed by the memory of those ultimate days.

"It is my holy of holies," he said, in one of the moods of expansion and unreserve difficult of comprehension to those of another race and northern blood, as he admitted a guest into what represented the inner sanctuary of Arenenberg, "my mother's room—the room in which she died."

There stood her bed, her ornaments lying on the tables as she had left them, with her most treasured relics—the wedding rings of her mother and Napoleon. And upon her bed was the miniature of Prince Louis Napoleon himself.

“She always wore it next her heart,” he explained. “In her last days, before I arrived, she would gaze at it for hours, and talk to it. . . . In this room,” he added, with an outburst of sentiment, “I always feel like a child wailing for his mother.”

Her son’s portrait before her eyes, his image printed upon her heart, Hortense passed those final months until his coming.

Her dependants loved her ; Madame Salvage was at hand to lavish upon her all the care possible to devoted affection ; others will have come and gone. But with none near to whom she was bound by the close ties of blood and kinship, with none intimately connected with other days to share her memories, it is difficult to conceive a woman lonelier.¹

The past, often more living than the present, must have borne her company. With little to distract her from remembrance, she will have lived over again joys and sorrows of years gone by, till, the dead bones becoming clothed with flesh and blood, Arenenberg and what belonged to it may have faded into a shadowy dream, replaced by the crowded chambers of the Tuileries, where she herself, a

¹ Mademoiselle Cochelet, then Madame Parquin, had died some two years earlier.

central figure in the throng, young and gay, and with life before her, was once more leader of the revels. And other scenes, not of revelry, will have passed before her eyes—scenes in which almost every one of the chief actors had preceded her to that better world whither, expressing with candour what many feel, she had desired her son to follow her as tardily as possible. The great Emperor will have borne his part in the show, dominating it in death as in life ; Joséphine will have lived again in her daughter's remembrance, gentle, gracious, winning, tender, fearful of the future, and shrinking from her impending doom ; Eugène, true and loyal, the support of all who loved him, no doubt occupied his old place, unobtrusive and content. And, coming still closer home, her own melancholy failures must have been passed by the dying woman in mournful review : her calamitous marriage, with its evil and far-reaching consequences ; her first great grief in the death of little Napoleon Charles ; the joys and sorrows of succeeding years,—all must have been remembered in their due sequence, during the long silent hours of that last summer, gaining, it may be, a truer significance than when the mists of passion obscured her vision.

In her will, prepared when death seemed imminent, the recollection of the past finds a prominent place ; nor is there wanting in some of its clauses a curious touch of that inveterate tendency to act to an audience which pursues men to the very verge of the grave, accompanies them to the scaffold, and forbids them to

the last to be oblivious of a public they could then, if ever, afford to despise.

"May my husband give a thought to my memory. Let him know that my greatest regret has been not to have been able to render him happy.

"I have no counsels to give my son. I know that he recognises his position and all the duties attached to his name.

"I forgive all the sovereigns with whom I have been brought into personal relations the levity with which they judged me.

"I forgive the ministers and *chargés d'affaires* of the Powers the false reports they constantly made concerning me.

"I forgive some Frenchmen, to whom I was enabled to be of use, the calumnies heaped by them upon me in order to clear themselves. I forgive all who believed them without inquiry, and I hope to live a little in the memory of my dear compatriots."

So it runs, the farewell utterance of the woman who had been so well loved and so bitterly hated, affording a key to the fashion in which, in taking leave of the world, her thoughts lingered over the recollection of her storm-tossed life, and—even if it was to pardon them—remembered the injuries she had suffered.

One injury, and the greatest, was not inflicted upon her. Prince Louis defeated the attempts made to exclude him from Switzerland. On July 15 he had

written to tell his father that passports had been refused him by the Austrian Ambassador in London, to whom he had applied. "I do not know what I shall do," he added. "It is very painful to me to be unable to go to my sick mother."

Few will blame the Prince for refusing to submit to the decree, when by means of a friend's papers he evaded the vigilance of the authorities and arrived late one night at Arenenberg.

It was not too soon. The Queen was in a condition when a joyful surprise might have been perilous. For days she had been murmuring the name of her absent son, and lest the shock of learning that he was at hand might prove too great, the sounds of an arrival were simulated on the following morning before he was admitted to her room.

Seeing her, if not before, he must have learnt the truth. Fresh physicians were summoned by the Prince, but nothing could avail to avert the end. Nevertheless, if she was dying, she was dying slowly. Through August and September mother and son were together, her eyes constantly resting on his face. His enemies, though indignant at his return to Switzerland, held their hand and deferred taking action, and in peace and quiet the autumn days passed by. A guest visiting Arenenberg during those weeks has left a picture of the dying Queen, with a face from which neither happiness nor sorrow had had power to banish the old gentle kindliness, as, carried out on to the lawn, she lay, accepting the offerings of daisies brought her

by the little three-year-old son of the narrator ; and, true to a favourite superstition, bade the child, " as a sign of her good fortune," seek for her a four-leaved trefoil.¹

So far as this world was concerned, fortune had done its best and its worst for Hortense de Beauharnais. With the first days of October came the end. As her strength failed, her mind recurred to the past, and the watchers, listening to her wandering talk, knew that she was living over again in spirit the crowded and eventful days of 1814 and 1815.

An eye-witness of the final scene² has described the end of the Queen " made by the sword and destroyed by the sword." After the storm the calm. Serenely she took leave of each member of her household ; then a great silence fell upon the death-chamber, broken at length by the dying woman as she asked those around to pray for her.

" Je n'ai fait de mal à personne," she murmured. " J'espère que Dieu aura pitié de moi. Adieu, Louis. Adieu, adieu," she repeated, as she held him in her arms.

She had fallen back, exhausted, when the Prince spoke, leaning over her and urgent in his demand for a last sign of recognition.

" Mother," he said, " do you know me ? It is your son—your Louis."

¹ *Réminiscences* (J. J. Coulmann), t. iii. pp. 416-17.

² *Revue de l'Empire*, 1842. Quoted in *La Reine Hortense* (Fourmestraux).

There was an effort to speak, to lift her heavy eyelids. It was vain. Only a movement, scarcely perceptible, proved that his voice had pierced the cloud gathering over her senses and had reached her spirit where it lingered on the threshold of the land of silence. The hand he held, stirring, made answer to his appeal. Then all was over.

The intendant, Fritz, had not been present. When, shortly afterwards, he entered the room, the Prince was still there, and in tears.

“Je crois bien qu’il pleurait,” said the Queen’s faithful servant. “Il y avait de quoi. Comme elle l’aimait !”¹

They carried her back to France. The country towards which her eyes had never ceased to turn with the longing of the exile, shut against her living, was opened to the dead, and she was laid in the church at Rueil at her mother’s side.

It had been October 5 when she passed away. On November 19 her body was brought to its last resting-place by her cousin, the Comte Tascher de la Pagerie, Chamberlain to the King of Bavaria ; and on a bitter January day, seven weeks later, they laid her in the vault below the ancient chapel of the Lords of Bazenville. To her burial gathered many to whom she was dear, not only as Hortense de Beauharnais, but as representative of Imperial tradition ; of the Bonaparte race, none but her old enemy, Caroline Murat, stood

¹ *Life of Napoleon III.* (Blanchard Jerrold), vol. ii. pp. 32-6.

beside her grave. The son she loved was still a banished man.

His day was to come. On the tomb erected to her in later days is inscribed :

À LA REINE HORTENSE

SON FILS

NAPOLÉON III.

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